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THE CONFLICT
and the CROWN



The Conflict and the Crown.

THE
CONFLICT AND THE CROWN.

Plain Parochial Sermons.

BY THE

REV. W. E. COGLAN, B.A.

WITH PREFACE BY THE

REV. BERDMORE COMPTON, M.A.



London :

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DEDICATION.

TO THE WORSHIPPERS
IN THE CHURCH OF ST. MICHAEL, LYNDHURST;
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF MANY SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS
SPENT IN THE COMFORT OF THE CATHOLIC MEANS OF GRACE;
THIS VOLUME IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

Sanctæ Individuæ Trinitati Gloria.

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Preface.

IN these days of conflict, one conflict is sadly overlooked. We hear enough of the conflict of humanity with evils of all kinds around it, more than enough of the various conflicts between various parts of the great human family.

But we hear very little of a greater conflict still, between the two kinds of humanity, the humanity of the first Adam and the humanity of the Second Adam ; the conflict between the unregenerate, and the regenerate man, between the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit lusting against the flesh.

We never can sufficiently protest against the ignoring this conflict, the hankering after a rest impossible on this side the grave

The incorruptible crown which is the reward of overcoming in the conflict, is laid up for the faithful soldier of Christ, but he must depart hence before he can receive it.

And therefore, sermons which force upon the reader the necessity of continual effort to bear oneself bravely in the conflict, are specially useful in our day. No substitute for laborious self-examination, for incessant tiresome watchfulness, no speculative theology, no mere clearness of view, no breadth of dogmatic opinion, no diluted sentiment of general lovingness,

will supply the place of active, honest, simple exertion in the war of faith against the world, the flesh, and the devil. This is the character of these sermons. Couched in a style which has the pleasant rhythm of oral delivery, ringing with the earnest desire of persuading as well as pleasing, they possess the additional merit of suddenly discharging unexpected arrows on the sluggish conscience.

May the Holy Spirit of God fix these arrows where they strike, and mature for the Crown the hearts they have roused to the Conflict.

B. COMPTON.

All Saints, Margaret Street.

Oct. 26th, 1877.

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SERMON I.

(ADVENT SUNDAY.)

THE SUMMONS TO THE SLEEPERS.

ROMANS XIII. 11.

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

THE Holy Catholic Church, the bride of Christ, ought now to be dwelling in sweet meditation upon the glories and blessings of her Lord's first Advent, and looking forward in eager expectation to His second coming in glory. Yes; the meditation ought indeed to be sweet when inspired history can summon before the mind so great and glorious a host of beautiful, self-denying acts, in the first lowly life on earth of the now glorified Bridegroom. In the ardour of our devotion and the fervour of our faith, the glories of Bethlehem and the sufferings of Calvary ought to seem as if we ourselves were watching by night upon the plain, or walking without the

city gates to see the Saviour die. Oh, for the Spirit of all-believing, trusting love which is the bond between the Bride and the Bridegroom: which seizes within its grasp the great events of the far off past, and lays them down at the worshippers' feet: which should inspire every Advent hymn and strike the first note of the summons which bids us watch for the second coming unto judgment and dominion! Sweet thought to dwell upon in holy quiet, within the heart's purest shrine! He is coming again and in His royal hand He brings salvation to His ransomed bride. Mark the hours as they pass swiftly by with but little good seed sown for the coming harvest; mark the days with the too impure sacrifice of the morning and the evening; mark the years with the sad and gloomy retrospect of golden opportunities numbered with the neglected past. This is no time for sleep cries the inspired Apostle; inspired to realize the mysteries of the first Advent and to behold in prophetic vision the triumphant glories of the second.

Meditation upon the wondrous past is indeed sweet food for the loving, longing soul; the soul loving ardently enough to long for the vision of that beauty which, though now invisible, is the

mainspring of all real spiritual life; but as the cross, the symbol of our faith, with one of its arms seems pointing to the days gone by—so, with the other, does it seem to direct our gaze forward to the glories of the coming King when all the mighty sowing of the Advent in humiliation shall be reaped in the triumphant glory of the Advent in majesty and might.

But the Advent that we are waiting and watching for is not only that of the victorious King with the rich rewards of conquest in His right hand: it is also the Advent of the Judge before whose seat of judgment all flesh shall stand. We dare not slumber with the knowledge that each day brings us nearer to the end of all things earthly; we must be awake and watch to catch the first sound of His footfall, the first note of the angels' music, the first blast of the announcing trumpet: verily, "it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Sad indeed is the thought that we are not ready yet: that the bride is not yet purified, that her garments are too sin-stained to meet the all glorious Bridegroom. But she is passing through the discipline of tribulation which shall make

her robes as white as the snow. Like Israel of old she is often weeping beside the waters of the Babylon of this world, and all music is hushed save the chanting of the penitential Psalm. But all her persecution and sorrow are foretold by the loving lips of the Redeemer Himself; foretold as the passage through the wilderness into the land of peace and plenty.

In the midst of her struggle she remembers the promise of the second Advent. Her redemption is accomplished, her freedom is secured by the first coming to lowliness and meekness and Calvary: the second coming shall bring with it her freedom from bondage, and her exaltation to the Bridegroom's side.

And if the grand and final exaltation of the Church of Christ be the exaltation also of each individual member; of each child with the dew of his baptism still damp upon his brow, the sign of the cross still bright and clear; of each weather-beaten soldier who has fought on through storm and tempest with faith enough to lead him to victory: if each member singly is to join in the glory of the second Advent, we dare not forget that the discipline and trial, the repentance, the sorrow and persecution belong,

too, to each individual soul struggling in a world of temptation, out of which the first Advent in humiliation has made it possible to escape! This, surely, is the question for you and for me, worshipping this Advent Sunday in the temple of the Lord. Have we felt with the Christian Apostle that "it is *high time* to awake "out of sleep: for now is our Salvation nearer than when we believed."

There arises before the mind, in all its sad significance, the startling fact, that it is only too possible to have our names written down upon the roll of the visible Church of Christ on earth, without the certainty of participating in the grateful welcome of the saints when the Lord shall come with his train of attendant angels. Truly, it is necessary to be enlisted in His own appointed way, into the ranks of that visible Church: it is necessary to be professors, in the face of a careless world, of the creed of the crucified; to kneel before His altar and spiritually to eat of His flesh and drink of His blood; but there are many soldiers who may be traitors at heart, fighting outwardly beneath the banner which inwardly they do not honour. Are all of us enrolled in the ranks of the invisible Christian

Army, known as His own true sheep to the Shepherd who died for us? The ten virgins in the Lord's parable were all outwardly worshippers at the same shrine; they were all apparently anxious for the coming of the bridegroom, anticipating the glories of the wedding feast.

Remember the five lonely souls prostrate in the agony of disappointment, awake at last to the utter uselessness of the lamp without the oil, of the mere profession of a faith which bears no fruit. What title had they to an entrance within the banquet chamber? Their faith had led them to no self-sacrifice, no succouring of the poor and needy, no feeding of the hungry in the name of Christ. And we, surely, shall be without title to a place in the Advent feast unless we can bring with us the fruit of our faith, all borne beneath the shadow of the Cross, and springing from our love for the everlasting bridegroom. Why should almost every line in the Gospel point to the anguish of Jesus, as in the days of His first Advent, he laboured and died to win heaven back again for fallen humanity? Why should we be taught to take up our daily cross and follow Him, if that salvation which is drawing nearer as each day dawns, is to be bestowed upon

every listless and lukewarm soul who lazily sighs for its enjoyment?

The same apostle who warns us to awake out of sleep as, in prophetic gaze, he beholds the first few streaks of light, which usher in the judgment morning: the same apostle, speaking of the same salvation for each individual soul, declares that by the help of God, it is our own selves who are to work it out with fear and trembling. If our faith is that merely mental assent which inclines us to bow the head in acquiescence as the Gospel declares unto us the story of our Saviour's woes and the lessons of Calvary's cross, leaving us in idle dreaming, longing only for His purity and sighing only for His love, without forcing us into energetic work to hasten his kingdom, without causing us to fear lest we stumble and fall, without making us tremble as we bow in penitence and sue for mercy: then are we sleeping as the day begins to dawn and it is high time to awake out of sleep.

To those who have arisen to the responsibility of the Christian manhood and are striving to cast off that drowsiness which lulls the soul into false peace; who are feeding daily on all the appointed means of grace; who clasp to their

hearts all the realities of the first Advent, as the Christian's imperishable birthright; unto those who look unto Jesus as the author and finisher of their faith, how cheering is the reflection that each morning as it dawns brings nearer and nearer the Salvation which the Cross has won. To the weary and heavy-laden Salvation is the absence of all fatigue, the freshness and vigour of everlasting youth: to the lonely and desolate it is the certainty of loving sympathy and an unselfish brotherhood: to Martha and Mary it is the resurrection to eternal life and reunion with Lazarus: to those to whom the flesh would give no peace it is the triumph of the spirit and the banishment of every earthly passion. To those whose names are written in the book of life Salvation is all these and something more; something that the eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive: it is the union of the Bride with the Bridegroom, the vision of the King in his beauty. "And if now we shrink at "the thought of the second Advent as the Advent "of the *Judge*, when every secret thing shall be "brought to light; let us remember that all those "who stand before Him will look upon the face of

“the Son of man and the sign of His redeeming
“work; upon the face of Him, who, when He goes
“forth to judge the world, will go forth clad in
“the garments which are dyed in the blood of
“His passion.”

SERMON II.

(ADVENT.)

THE SAVIOUR'S PROMISED RETURN.

JOHN XIV, 3.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

STEP by step the news of the Advent of Jesus spread over the world. Away from the nation that clamoured for His blood, His chosen disciples turned with all the self-denial of inspired heroism, to renovate the earth with the message of His Cross. “He was a light to lighten the “Gentiles.” A Holy Church sprung into being as the guardians of His oracles, the dispensers of His sacraments, the ambassadors of His kingdom, and all His servants were commanded to watch for the day of His coming again.

In the chapter from which my text is taken, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, having nearly accomplished the mission of His first Advent, prepares His troubled disciples for His departure, and

comforts them with the assurance of His return to bless His Church.

As we read His sublime words we seem to enter into the very Holy of Holies of the sacred writings—to behold a model which no human hand can imitate.

He knew that His followers were grieved—they had reason to be grieved. Had they been blessed with the knowledge that afterwards dawned upon them concerning the glorious plan of Redemption, they might have been better prepared for the bitter separation; but now, what they thought of was the tearing asunder of the tender ties of their friendship, the loss of the Holy Being, whose guiding and purifying influence seemed the necessity of their life.

As He spoke of the many mansions of His Father's house, in which is room for all the countless myriads past, present, and to come; as He told them He was going there, to return to His place, to revisit His home, He promised in words of never-dying comfort to the Christian Church, that He would prepare for them, too, a place in His presence for ever, to which He would come again to conduct them in the hour of His triumph, "And if I go to prepare a place

“for you, I will *come again* and receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye may be also.”

Oh! who has not felt a thrill of pure pleasure as some well loved friend starting for a far off land, has promised, when his purpose shall be accomplished, that he will come again to revisit his friends whom he leaves in tears. As the time seems long and dreary without him, should we not feed our love with the bright memories of the past, when he was with us; run over all the happy scenes through which we have passed together, obey his slightest wish, cherish everything that was his; should we not tell our children of his friendship, and hang his picture on our walls?

We can never succeed in the life of Christian purity without feeling this personal friendship unto our Elder Brother Christ who died for us. He is far away, I know, in the courts of a bright and glorious heaven, to pass no more through the degradation and sorrow of the days of His *first* Advent. But can we not cast off from us this thick veil of flesh, and behold Him ever spiritually present, holding us up when we are stumbling, whispering comfort in the time of trial?

Who would ever have thought to look upon

the lives of us who profess to be waiting and watching for His kingdom, who would ever have thought that His own Apostle had proclaimed the truth that *without holiness* no man shall see the Lord? We read, with wonder, of the self-denying, self-sacrificing lives of the first pioneers of His faith. See how a handful of faithful disciples has spread since then, into myriads of professing believers; but amongst us all are there many so sure of His coming again, so certain of the realization of the Christian's hope as to be willing to follow in the footsteps of the Apostolic band, and lay down their lives for His sake?

We are told by the Apostle St. Peter, that in the last days there shall be scoffers, asking in the spirit of unbelief, "where is the promise of His coming?" Dashing aside, as idle tales, as incredible to the human intellect all the promises and threats of revelation, they enquire among the mysteries of nature, and the material world, for some sign of Messiah's coming. Well for us, if we, who profess to love Him and follow in His steps, could point to our lives as proofs of our faith, as a sign of His approach. Where is our eager expectation, our thirst after righteous-

ness, our fond, fond love of His memory, our obedience to His commands? His *visible Church*, set to be the guardian of His treasures, is torn by discord, and dishonoured by cowardice. Thousands and thousands of her professing members are tossed hither and thither upon the waves of an unstable faith. The very doctrines which the martyrs died to preserve are mutilated and distorted, no longer the cherished guides to our life in this troublesome world. The sacraments, once thought channels of divine aid, of grace and strength no where else to be found, are robbed in want of faith of half their virtue. The bread and wine is despised and neglected as the spiritual food of some few, whom the world in scorn calls saints ; and the waters of baptism are used as a mere form, a sign coupled with no certainty of the fulfilment of a promise of regeneration, the presence of the Holy Dove, the sowing of heavenly seed. Well may the world scoff at the spectacle of a divided Church, a dishonoured creed ! Turning from this sad sight to the undisturbed face of nature, wherein is no sign of a change ; seeing that still as heretofore the sun rises in the morning, and in the evening sinks beneath the wave ; that men live and die

and are born to misery ; seeing that as the time is said to draw near, there is no sign or wonder to herald His approach, well may the scoffers ask, “ *Where is the promise of His coming?*”

Oh, how different is His memory of us, His abiding love to the Church He has redeemed! As St. Stephen was blessed with a vision of the exalted Messiah at the right hand of His Father, so we, by the eye of Faith, may behold Him still labouring on our behalf, never blotting us from His memory, though we wander often and often and grieve Him with the blackness of our ingratitude. Not content to reign alone in the unutterable glory of His Father's kingdom, home again after suffering and desolation, crowned with the crown He has won in the conflict of woe ; not content with absolute dominion, the worship of angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven ; He is now preparing for us a place among the many mansions of His Father's House, to which, we have His pledged word, He will come again to lead us Home. He prepares it by unbarring the gate that would keep us out ; He prepares it by pleading His sacrifice and presenting our prayers. Is He not *still* our great High Priest through whom and by

whom and in whom every offering is purified and rendered meet for the Holy of Holies? He has quenched the flaming sword in the hands of the Cherubim, and poor Humanity, tossed about sorely by winds and tempest, now parched with heat of the sun, now frozen by the cold, now hungry, now thirsty, now weary and worn; Humanity now sick and ill, healed by looking upwards to the pierced hands and feet and wounded side, may cling in penitence and faith to the cross, and enter once again into the Eden that was lost, with no more fear of rebellious thoughts, all of which will be banished in the presence of the Redeemer.

It doubtless will not be the lot of us who are here to be still upon earth when the trumpet shall sound; but, nevertheless must we stand upon the watch tower and strain our eyes for the signs of His coming; for His advent is the day of our dissolution, when all earthly visions fade from the eye which opens upon another world. What if, as we lie asleep, He should not awaken us to join in His triumphant train!—We cannot surely believe that hereafter there is to be for the wicked and the good a like inheritance of happiness and contentment. Without any revelation our reason

would convince us that sowing is the cause of the harvest, that we must reap as we scatter the seed.

I cannot explain to you what will be the portion of the wicked ; I cannot tell you what it all means when their lot is spoken of as one of endless pain and humiliation, with no hope, no comfort ; I cannot tell you what Hell is, nor the worm that never dieth, the place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. May our God preserve us from it all !

But look at the suffering and anguish of Jesus, the drops of blood, the bitter cry of desolation at the end of a life of unceasing humiliation, and ask if this must not have been to save us from misery which no human tongue can picture.

But I leave you rather with the promise of the righteous, the reward of the faithful follower, the hope of a mansion in the Home above—Jesus is gone to prepare a place for you and He is coming to take you to Himself. May it be ours as the time draws near to have faith bright enough to catch the echoes of the Heavenly music, and to respond in a rapturous welcome ; to answer His voice declaring “I come quickly,” with the only words that He will be pleased to hear,—“Even so
“Come Lord Jesus.”

SERMON III.

(CHRISTMAS DAY.)

THE ANGELIC ANTHEM.

S. LUKE II. 14.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

THESE were the words of the heavenly choir, who broke forth into one joyous anthem as Christ, the Son of man, began His life upon earth. Not far off from the city of Bethlehem, perhaps in those very fields where David had fought with the lion and the bear, some shepherds were watching their flocks, guarding them from the prowling beasts and robbers of the desert. The joyful news that the Redeemer had come to earth rang through the courts of heaven, and filled the loving hearts of the angels with holy joy. They who hover around us, filling our hearts with pure thoughts and aspirations, and stirring us up to God-like actions at the bidding of the King, felt then, as they feel now, a keen and

lively interest in leading men home to the land from which they are wandering. The shepherds sitting in darkness were the emblem of the whole race of men dwelling in the blackness of sin; and the Christmas light that shone upon them from above, the emblem of that never-dying, never-changing Light of the world—the Good Shepherd that layeth down His life for the sheep. No sooner had the message of peace been proclaimed, than a multitude of the heavenly host joined him who had proclaimed it, and, as it were, in one loud and joyful chorus sung forth the mission of Christ. There was no envy to stay a single voice or hush a single note; though the burden of this very song was the exaltation of man above every angel into the renewed image of the everlasting God; though the sum and substance of the glad tidings they chanted in the glorious light, were man's victory over death and hell, and a crown that angels can never wear; yet suddenly a mighty throng of heaven's choir sung the Almighty's praises with pure lips; there was no selfish sorrow that the glad tidings was not for them, no discontent at their meaner destiny! Here is a lesson for us to learn! Man exalted over man is the bitter cause of envy,

hatred and malice, the offspring of the selfish heart. How few there are amongst us who can unfeignedly rejoice from the inmost heart when our friends and fellows are lifted over our heads. This feeling is one great curse of our lives, the cause of many a lasting sorrow. Since the days of Cain, men in general have loved themselves too well to give up one fancied blessing to crown the happiness of another. This is the way of the world, and the carnal man; but the Christian knows by the revelation of the Spirit which is given in answer to earnest prayer, that self-denial is a winning weapon in the fight with sin, and a certain means of discipline for the purity our Father loves.

In the spirit of unselfish devotion, then, sung the angels of heaven the burden of man's redemption, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men." There were myriads of other songs for the sinless choir to sing—there were the greatness, and the power, and the holiness of God—there were the mighty works of His hands, the countless wonders in nature, which baffle the wisest of mortal heads; but the angels' hearts were loving; here was the crowning proof of the goodness of a fond Father,

tenderness more tender than that of a mother towards the children she has borne. And thus first in the angelic anthem our heartfelt homage and worship are directed to God the Father, and we are summoned to join the angels in singing His praise, "Glory to God in the highest."

All glory to His unspeakable love in giving His only begotten Son, to take our nature upon Him, that He might purify and exalt it from earth to heaven. How often do we lose sight of this! We dwell sometimes upon the self-denying work of Christ, until we seem to forget altogether, in the great plan of the world's redemption, the Father's mighty gift of His well beloved Son.

What could have been the feelings of the faithful Abraham, as he led his son to the mountain; as he bound him hand and foot, and made ready the knife, as he stretched forth his hand to take the life of his well beloved! What are the feelings now of a fond father, as he sees his child slowly sinking into the grave before him; as he sees his eyelids close, and hears the last sigh! I know we cannot fully comprehend the attributes of God; but images like these are meant faintly to represent unto us, as far as

we are able to understand, the unspeakable love of God the Father which was the opening note, the first thrilling strain in the grandest of Christmas anthems, sung long ago by pure voices on the plains of Bethlehem. May each loving heart, struggling below in the ranks of the militant Church, catch its sweet, harmonious echoes, and acknowledge the mighty love that prompted the mighty gift!

And then come the blessings to be showered on earth by the new Adam, in whom all may be born again: "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men." There had been enmity between God and man; the way to heaven had been dark; but now there was to be reconciliation, access unto the Father through the Son. He was born into the world, Who, in prophets, had been foretold as "The Prince of Peace." As the light that encircled the angelic choir banished the darkness of the night and brought a new day to the watching shepherds; so Christ, the Light of the world, was to banish darkness from the hearts of men, and to kindle a fire that should never die away.

The earth was at peace when He was born; there were no wars or tumults to disturb the unclouded joy of His birth. Nations had lain

down their arms as if the whole universe, by common consent, stood watching and waiting as He came—hushed into awful silence for the coming of Emmanuel.

His welcome peace was not ushered in by the victorious might of armies, and the power of the sword; lowly, meek and poor; as a helpless infant, born in a stable, He began His weary pilgrimage. As one of us, and the lowliest amongst us; as one of us, and the poorest amongst us, He took the first step on the march to Calvary; nevertheless there was peace upon earth. And still has He the power and the love to shed that lovely peace upon the hearts of all who are waiting and watching for His second Advent in majesty and might; as He rebuked the boiling waves, and stayed the violence of the tempest, saying, "Peace be still;" so now He is the source of all joy, calming the troubled waters of the soul; the Good Shepherd that gently leads His sheep into green pastures—the Pilot of our ship into the haven of everlasting peace.

And the last echo from the song of the angels that slowly died away as they returned to the courts of heaven was the comforting assurance, "Good will towards men." Not only good will

from God to man, but good will among men in the Christian brotherhood, in the fullest and sweetest remembrance of the purity of the God-made man. The intemperate rejoicing of a Godless world is no meet celebration of the birthday of Jesus, the Pure Redeemer ; carnal men have ever seized the Church's festivals as excuses for excesses which the loving soul repudiates and abhors ; thus in their fearful hardihood, summoning even the miracle of Bethlehem as a witness against them. Worshippers before the Cross have indeed a well-grounded right to rejoice ; to rejoice on the morning of that day, whereon the Restorer and Redeemer of our race was clothed in our humanity. If, with some of us, the sorrows which are hard to bear ; sorrows which mar the harmony of our family meetings ; sickness, bereavement, the absence of those we love, the mischief-making of the hard-hearted and unkind ; if these things seem to dim the bright light of Bethlehem ; let us still take heart and rejoice, for we are celebrating the Advent of one who came to banish or alleviate the causes of our woe ; to bring those who are far off near to us again, to heal sicknesses, to comfort in bereavement, to shed the bright beams of His

peace upon all who remember and celebrate His birth, and cling fondly to the salvation offered in His holy life and cruel death.

“Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” We must take up the heavenly anthem, and let its music spur us on in all works of love; open hands and open hearts to day to the needy; forgiveness of injuries, obliteration of old wrongs, strength added to the bonds of pure friendship, the knitting together of families in Christian love—a love which must shine brightly around our own cherished hearth, brightly enough to let some of its light and heat fall kindly upon the world without.

But we must not forget that our Master has told us Himself how we may best celebrate His memory. He has pointed out no deed of heroic courage, no dazzling achievement as the most acceptable homage to bring to His feet. He points to the bread and wine in His own most blessed sacrament; His voice comes to us over the lapse of ages in tones that must be precious; we know the command that must not be slighted, the entreaty that it is the heart’s best blessing to listen to, “This do in remembrance of me.”

Welcome Him now with rapture as He comes

a lowly infant ; mourn with Him in penitence as come surely on the dark shadows of His passion ; go with Him to the Cross whereon He died ; follow Him in prayer as His glorified body takes the royal place by His Father's side ; and then, God grant it, each one of us with purified vision and ransomed souls and bodies, may behold Him as the Everlasting King in all the splendour of His Divine Beauty.

Then shall be the fullest realization of the first Christmas anthem. The redeemed bride, the holy Church, shall chant in triumph the wondrous glory of the Father ; the peace shed lovingly upon human souls struggling upon earth shall be assured to the faithful as an abiding gift, never to be dimmed in its brightness, or lessened in its power to bless ; and good will and holy Christian love shall be the bond never to be broken, which shall unite all in one holy brotherhood, offering up the ceaseless worship of the eternal Sabbath.

SERMON IV.

(THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR.)

THE WISE NUMBERING OF OUR DAYS.

PSALM XC. 12.

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

WE have here the ardent prayer of Moses the Servant of God—the first of Israel’s Prophets and Apostles—as he sadly gazed upon the vanity of human life, and saw almost every man and woman of his race and age pass to the grave, during the forty years wandering in the wilderness. The whole Psalm is a touching lament over the shortness of human life, which is compared to grass springing up and as quickly fading away ; to a tale of excitement and sorrow, of mingled joys and hopes, which is briefly told, and its sound is heard no more. As he saw, one by one, those multitudes of full grown men and

women, whom he had triumphantly led over the Red Sea in spite of the hosts of Pharaoh—as he saw them, one by one, slip away, claimed by the King of Terrors, denied the promised inheritance of Canaan for the spirit of guilty murmuring and discontent, his heart sought eagerly for the lesson to be taught; his prayer was uttered ardently in the true spirit of supplication, that the experience, thus dearly bought by the thousands in the wilderness, might have its due effect upon him and those committed to his care. He saw the young taking the place of the old, the children occupying the seats of the fathers, and he knew that a great and mighty destiny was in store for his own well-loved race; that kingdoms should bow before the prowess of their arms and the skill of their warriors; that Canaan, denied to him and the men of his age, was still to be the cherished possession of his nation; and, with the strong unselfish love that so often won a blessing and turned away the sharp edge of an impending curse, he prayed that the days of humanity, as they passed swiftly by, might be noted in humility by obedient and humble hearts, and the true wisdom culled from *the tale they have to tell*: “So teach us,” he

bursts forth in enthusiastic prayer, "So teach us "to *number our days*, that we may apply our "hearts unto wisdom."

It would, surely, be wise of us to take up the pleading words of Moses the man of God. Humanity, unaided by the inspiring Spirit of our Father who is omnipotent, is powerless to gather up the rich harvest of learning that the lives of our brethren and ourselves can teach us. Who that has lived to the full number of three-score years and ten, can point, without help from above, to the various lessons meant to be learnt in the years so swiftly passed away, that the heart may be wise with the wisdom of Heaven! A sad and bitter lot is it for him who has come to the last opportunity of numbering his days; who feels that his days have dwindled to hours, almost to minutes; feels it surely by his failing strength and darkened vision; a sad and bitter lot is it for him to run back, with all the mental power that is left concentrated for the effort, along a life, whereof each day and year has been passed only in the world of business and of pleasure; to behold no bright spots consecrated by Christian charity and noble effort for the good of *his race*; *no self-sacrifice* that a brother's hard

lot might be smoothed kindly and turned into a happier channel ; who, with the cloudless vision that often belongs to the soul as earth is slipping from beneath us, can count opportunity after opportunity of Christ-like works scattered unthankfully to the winds, and the old idol *self*, still made the pivot on which all things have turned, still the wretched and miserable shrine upon which have been offered the heart's choicest gifts, upon which for ever has been poured the incense of prayer and praise.

The whole Revelation of Heaven is full of striking and thrilling pictures ; of metaphors, and allegories, and parables, meant to impress indelibly upon the human heart and mind the shortness and uncertainty of human life. Man disporting himself in the pride of intellect and vigour of physical health : making his plans with no provision for the withholding of Heaven's blessing—the overthrow of all his hopes—the failure of all his efforts—the sudden summons to the quietness of the grave : man thus numbering his days by calculation merely human, with no thought of wisdom imparted by Divinity, is ever held up as a warning, an example to be avoided as one would guard one's ship from a sharp and

dangerous rock which would surely sink it beneath the waves. There rises up vividly before us that striking picture drawn by the master hand of Christ Himself, the picture of a man with his eyes bent downward upon earth, accumulating riches and gloating over their possession ; engrossed with the building and re-building that he might stow away safely the rich bounty which the earth was pouring into his lap ; chuckling to himself in the misery of a miser's joy as he surveyed the accomplishment of his hopes, the growing and world-honoured importance of the man of many acres. How sadly the story ends ! The unseen counsels of omnipotence, that he had ignored, had already decreed the sudden termination of his worldly career ; still bent upon an increase of worldly prosperity, in the very midst of earthly meditations he heard the summons of Heaven, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

If thus picture after picture is summoned from inspired imagination ; if all the allegories and parables and metaphors which nature can supply, are thus summoned to illustrate and impress upon the mind the certain fact that this life of time, compared with an endless eternity, is less

than one tiny grain of sand compared with the millions on the shore ; less than a drop of water compared with the vastness of the ocean ; less than one single human soul compared with the millions that have lived and died and have yet to be born ; it requires no great intellect to grasp the corresponding fact, equally taught by Revelation and illustrated with equal beauty—that the treasures here to be won are worse than nothing compared with the riches laid up in the treasure-house of Heaven—that all the afflictions, which sorely try the weakness of our humanity and flood our souls with sorrow, are nothing compared with the joy which Christ has purchased for the souls counted worthy for His sake. The Christian upon earth thus richly and mercifully taught, has a right and proper estimate of this fleeting world, as the scene of a brief and necessary pilgrimage for the training of his soul for another and a brighter sphere. As each year rolls on, he marks the days and hours that bring to him temptations, and joys, and sorrows, and endeavours by Heaven's light to cull lessons from the past for his future guidance ; and knowing that the vision that is dimmed by earth must fail to grasp at once all the teaching that

his Father has designed, he hastens now to the fountain of all light and love, pouring forth his soul in the earnest intreaty of a great and mighty Prophet. "Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Let each individual soul take up the prayer of the faithful Moses. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Is there nothing to mourn over in the year that has nearly run its course? Nothing to make us fall humbly on our knees and plead that the year to come may be marked by a better and a nobler life? How many resolutions entered into cheerfully in self confidence at the beginning of the year, can be remembered as miserable failures and monuments of our weakness. Still, perhaps, there is the old sin that has beset us since the days of our childhood, with its full and fatal power, hugging our souls and stifling them into spiritual inactivity, which is spiritual death; perhaps, many times we may have burst from its influence, and by a strong effort of human will cast it from us with a stern resolve never to lie down beneath its power again; but the human will alone and unaided has failed to protect us;

it has come back again with more than its former fascination and tightened its unholy grasp, and we, as the time rolls on, have less and less the power to shake it off. In looking back upon days like this, epochs and landmarks in the life of the soul, we have indeed need to be taught in answer to our earnest pleadings, so to apply our hearts unto that best and noblest wisdom which counsels us warmly to trust but little to the frail and feeble arm of flesh, but at once to flee for succour to the Representative of perfect Humanity, who, as at this time was born of a pure Virgin.

And, surely, there must be many blessings too, which a faithful memory can recall, and which are summoning us to lift our hearts in enthusiastic adoration; blessings vouchsafed secretly, known unto no man; and blessings shared in love amongst our families and friends. It is no little gift that our lives have been spared while others have been taken away; for though there may be many willing enough to lay down this weary burden of sinful flesh and burst away from the continual struggle that knows no end until life is over; yet who would not give thanks *even for one* extra day, in which to mourn over

an unforgiven sin with penitential tears, and make the soul more fit, by a little more charity, a little more faith, a little more love, for the presence of a Holy God.

In conclusion, let me remind you of that magnificent scene in the opening chapter of the book of Proverbs, where wisdom is represented as reasoning and pleading with the wayward sons of men. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." This grand wisdom of the *older* Revelation, in the *new* becomes clothed with personality; and the wisdom of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, clothed in our humanity, and drawn nearer to us by taking our nature in the perfection of its beauty, proclaims the same invitation, reiterates the same warning. If we so learn the lesson of our swiftly fading life as to apply our hearts firmly and fully unto Him, and so number our days by the teaching of the Spirit, then, when there are no more days to number, and time has passed into eternity, this Wisdom of God, our Saviour, Redeemer, and Friend, shall welcome us to the mansions of His Father.

SERMON V.

(EPIPHANY.)

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

S. JOHN VIII. part of v 12.

“I am the Light of the world.”

As but a short time since we celebrated the birth of Him who clothed himself in our Humanity ; the miraculous birth which was announced by a flood of light and the singing of angels to *Jewish* shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem ; so now, at the season of Epiphany, we call to mind the manifestation of Christ to the *Gentile* world—the star, different from all other stars, and brighter than all other heavenly bodies, which led wise men to the infant Saviour, offering humbly the gifts that were presented to an Eastern King.

It would be useless for us to speculate as to what could have been the nature of this heavenly

light which thus guided those three chosen Heathen philosophers to the home of the Holy Virgin's Son ; it can scarcely matter whether it was a meteor, or a comet, or a planet, so long as we are willing to receive the inspired assurance that it was a real and visible manifestation in the heavens, indicating the birth and the birth-place of the expected Prince.

The uncertainty and apparent impossibility of such a manifestation may be hailed with satisfaction by those who delight to discover, in Divine Revelation, things which are at variance with human experience, and who reject, from first to last, all that is miraculous in God's dealing with men ; this is an exaltation of the human intellect which would for ever banish the grandest and most comforting truths of the Christian creed, and which, if honestly and consistently followed to the end, would multiply the doubts and difficulties of our path on earth which, God knows, are already hard enough and sad enough in the bitterness of their reality.

The intellectual doubts which harrass and perplex so many among the noblest natures as they ponder over the apparent difficulties of Revelation, are but too often the result of that pride and self-

conceit, which refuse to resign into the hands of another, even though he be Divine, the gradual training of their finite minds. How often does not Holy Scripture point out to us, in this respect, our true and proper attitude towards the God of Heaven, the Father who made us, the Son who redeemed us, the Holy Ghost who inspires with all that is holy. We are told to become as little children—children holding their Father by the hand, listening to His voice, obeying His commands, awaiting His own good time for the full announcement of His will and our destiny.

As little children, in the first fresh innocent bloom of their childhood, have implicit confidence in a father's love, so we, the children of our Heavenly Father, must, in the full assurance of faith, be content to wait, according to His word, for the full and perfect dawn of Eternal Light to banish all the difficulty and doubt which now obscure the vision of our finite human intellect. Well for the heart, and the mind, and the soul, that can resign everything into the guiding hand of Him who proclaimed Himself to be *the Light of the world*: in the faithful and loving following of *whom there is* promised the revelation of all the

brightness our human vision has the power to behold on earth ; and hereafter a satisfying, full and perfect, of all doubts and difficulties in the complete revelation which can be imparted only when this mortal shall have put on immortality, and we shall be like our Lord Jesus Christ and see Him as He is.

But let us return to the subject our Church now places prominently before us, the manifestation of Christ as “ a Light to lighten the Gentiles.”

To the Heathen, prepared for some new thing, waiting in all the eagerness of breathless expectation, there appeared in the brightness of broad day-light, like the pillar of fire that led the wanderers in the wilderness, a star whose dazzling splendour the light of an Eastern sun could never dim.

The three Magi, or wise men, who were chosen as representatives of the great mass of mankind to come to the king as ambassadors for peace, seem, by all accounts, to have been philosophers who, by the study of nature, and especially the wonders of the heavens, had been led to cast aside the grosser idolatry and superstitions of their countrymen, and thus to have approached *one step nearer to the true God.*

To these men seeking after God, groping among the shadows if haply they might find Him, the bright light in the heavens came kindly as a welcome summons to a better faith, a call to a nobler destiny, "a Light to lighten the Gentiles."

Those three men, marching that toilsome journey from the East, told of things then hidden in the councils of the Almighty, but surely to come to pass as time rolled on, and that Light spread over the face of the earth. They were the first fruits of the Heathen who, by the power of Christ, were to leave the groves and altars of idolatry, the home of their dark belief, and to cast themselves humbly before the cross of Him who, for them, was crucified. Those three men added their testimony to the crowd of accusers against a people who had closed their own eyes and hardened their own hearts; they came to the very centre of Israel's kingdom and summoned Israel's chiefs to open their own books, and read there the fulfilment of the promise of the coming of the Son of Man; and when, still led by Heaven's guiding light, they discovered the Holy Babe, they presented to Him their gifts with the heart's best homage—Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

The Gold speaks to us of all that is costly and beautiful and true; every lovely virtue that is tried and purified in the fire of affliction—every talent that dazzles by its brightness—every power and blessing that is bestowed upon man by a loving Father's hand, all rendered humbly back again unto Him who gave them. Soul and body dedicated in sickness and in health, in life and in death, in poverty, in riches, in every condition of life, dedicated as a free-will offering unto the King of Kings, the universal Lord of all. The most precious blessings that gladden the path upon earth, all given up without murmuring, though the gift may tear our hearts, unto Him who would fain have had His own bitter cup pass away, but who nevertheless prayed in all earnestness and agony "*Thy will be done.*"

And Frankincense speaks unto us of the homage due unto God, the offering of prayer, the bending of the knee. Christ is our great High Priest gone into Heaven within the veil, and before the mercy seat of God, as it were in a golden censer, He presents the prayers of the faithful. As incense ascends from off the earth and is wafted upwards towards the heavens, so *the honest cry of all faithful hearts, trusting in*

the sacrifice and love of the Lamb, is borne upwards and presented by the Great High Priest, an offering well pleasing unto the Father.

There is none too lowly for his cry to be heard, none too poor for his voice to reach unto Heaven. Long ago the Jews alone held the censer ; with them alone was the offering priest ; but we have now the Priest and the censer all ready to present our prayers, all ready within the courts of the everlasting temple before the throne.

And the Myrrh : “They did it for His “burial”—in token of His death. It prefigures the sufferings that led to glory ; the pain that ended in peace ; the death that gives us life ; the cross that won the crown ; the burden and sorrow of the earth ending in the joys of Heaven.

With gifts like these, will *all* men come if they are wise ; travelling through long and tedious ways, overcoming every difficulty, despising the scoffers, and disregarding the threats of kings, and consecrating the best and noblest they have to the service of Him, who, pitying our darkness, and longing to banish all sin and sorrow, and to wipe away all tears, declares unto us in His unchangeable word, “I am the Light “of the world ; he that followeth Me shall not

“walk in darkness, but shall have the light
“of life.”

Not the light of this uncertain *human* life which passes swiftly on, and leaves us sighing beside the grave; albeit, that since Jesus died, there are angels sitting there, clothed in white raiment, and pointing to whither He has gone, as the happy meeting place of all godly souls; “not the light of this uncertain *human* life, “wherein are noble efforts baffled, pure hopes “discomfited and crushed; good seed, sown with “care, and watered by the blood of martyrs, “choked or carried off, and never bearing fruit; “not the light of this uncertain *human* life, where- “in are places void within our cherished homes; “and millions with the mighty hunger of the “heart still sharp and unsatisfied; millions still “groping in the darkness, falling and bruising “their unstable souls, as they wrestle with their “countless foes.” Not this uncertain flickering light, but the light of the Eternal City, wherein no graves shall be opened, no knowledge withheld, no mystery unexplained, and the mighty hunger of all purified hearts shall be satisfied for ever by those bright beams falling from the throne of God, whereon the Lord Jesus Christ, God

and Man, shall reign over the kingdom of the faithful, joined together in one universal brotherhood—the glorious work of Calvary's blood-stained cross.

SERMON VI.

(SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.)

PRAYER IN THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

S. JOHN XVI. part of v. 24.

“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name.”

THE opening words of the Septuagesima Collect introduce the subject of our present meditations. “O Lord, we beseech Thee to hear the prayers of Thy people.” To-day is sounded the first note of the Holy Church’s summons to the coming Lenten discipline; the exultant worship of Christmas and Epiphany is gradually to yield to the stricter exercises of self-examination and penitence; and the secret of all success in this, as in every other preparation for the purity above, is hearty, earnest prayer in the Holy name of Jesus.

It has been well said by one of our poets that

“Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed.”

It is not always necessary that the mouth should speak when the heart is full, and we are conscious of

“The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast,”

Often and often is the heart *so full* that the mouth cannot utter the words which could express its ardent longing.

There is praying which is sublimely silent, as if the soul, conscious of the nearness of the Father, and its own inherited impurity, dared not express in sounds the desire thus striving to reach the throne of grace.

Who that has ever felt the blessedness of communion with heaven, but can recall some hour of rapt devotion in which earth and its sorrows seemed almost forgotten, in the consciousness that between the soul and its Almighty Maker there could be a real and true communication promised and prepared by Jesus the Interceder.

Strange and mighty miracle of the Christian Revelation! The conditions of the old covenant

are now to be dispensed with. The Almighty's communion with man is attended *now* by no thunder and lightning awing the souls of the multitudes, who stand beneath the mountain enshrouded in darkness; the Mediator is a mightier than Moses; Divinity, clothed with our nature and purifying our imperfections.

The secret of unanswered prayers falling back again to earth, having no power to leave it; the secret of innumerable failures and disappointments and eclipses of faith is clear as the sun. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing *in my name*." The key note to all heaven's harmony was hitherto unknown upon earth; man is lifted out of his impurity by the purity of Jesus; he is cleansed through His holiness, and justified through faith in His life and His death. He is rendered thus a welcome suppliant on his knees before the throne of the Father; welcome to join with angels and archangels, saints living and dead, in that holy communion whereof the blessed name of Jesus Christ is the sacred watchword.●

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." Ask indeed, somehow, humanity must: there is the keenest instinct within the human breast of some Godlike power; a power to be roused to anger

by rebellion ; to be propitiated and softened by humble intercessions. Wherever men have lived and died and struggled ; “in the now deserted wilderness, and upon the lonely promontory ; “in cities now sunk beneath the earth for “centuries ;” there have been shrines, and temples, and altars, all bearing witness to the insuperable instinct within the human breast that there is one that heareth prayer.

So called philosophers may try, as they have lately tried, to disprove its existence by reason, and its utility by an appeal to nature’s unchangeable laws ; but were there no revelation at all, the testimony of every nation under the sun, with its shrines, and its altars, and its temples, and our own ardent longing for communion with a higher and a purifying power, would be sufficient to discredit their arguments and reassure the doubting suppliants.

But the revelation of Jesus Christ is peculiarly the revelation of the *power of prayer*. The nations of the heathen could plead in their prayers their own contrition and the mercy of the Deity ; the Jews could plead their own penitence and the mercy and promises of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob ; but the

life and death of Jesus Christ turn the darkness of the Heathen and the twilight of the Jews into a comparative blaze of heavenly light. We have something more to plead than our own contrition and the mercy of God. If we fall upon our knees, weighed down with the sense of our own guilt, our spirits rise as we plead the innocence of Jesus the Regenerator. If we are proud, we plead His humility ; if we are cowardly, we plead His courage ; if we are unstable, we plead His steadfastness and stability ; if we are faithless and unbelieving, we plead His immoveable confidence in His Father's love.

As soon as ever the waters of regeneration have banished the inherited sin of Adam, we are admitted into the community that is entitled to plead every act in our Saviour's holy life, every trait in His spotless character, as reasons good and true why God the Father should listen to our prayers and grant our petitions.

“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in *my name*.” Behold ! I reveal to you now, I reveal Myself as the *One* who presents your prayers in a golden censer before the throne.

It will not do to come with the prayer of the Deist, who believes in the universal Father with

no only-begotten Son, the word-made flesh.

If there be but one Person in the everlasting godhead, then between that one Person and all humanity there is a gulf that can never be passed, never bridged over; men may sigh beneath the burden of their guilt, and the misery of their woes, with no hope of alleviation in this world or the next; they may wander weary and worn, but there is no hope of the paradise of rest, no angel sitting at the tomb.

It will not do to come with the spirit of the Pantheist, trusting to some all-pervading, indefinite influence, heard in the wind and the waves, and dwelling in the woods.

It will not do to come with the undeveloped instinct of the darkened heathen, nor the uncertain light of Israel.

I reveal unto you the second Person in the undivided Trinity, who, in time appointed, has come in the likeness of sinful flesh, to bridge over that dreadful gulf which sin has created, and widened, and deepened. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; but now ask, and ye shall receive; as little children look up to heaven to the propitiated Father, and pour out your burdens; there is no difficulty unheeded; no sigh un-

noticed; no holy longing uncared for; no heavenly desire disregarded. Ask now in my name that your joy may be full; the joy of receiving the best and kindest answer to all earnest and ardent prayer, breathed forth or unexpressed within the loving heart in the Holy name of Jesus.

“ Dear Name ! the rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding place,
My never-failing treasury filled
With boundless stores of grace.”

SERMON VII.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE CONFLICT AND THE CROWN.

REV. II. part of v 10.

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

THE Epistle for to-day suggests to us the subject of our meditations—the career of St. Paul and that of every Christian struggling for victory. St. Paul is introduced to us in a light anything but favourable; but we are thus enabled all the more to appreciate the power that wrought the change. He was once a zealous and determined persecutor of the first scanty followers of the creed of Christ; not content with meeting them by chance and then visiting on their heads the Jewish punishment of their Christian Faith; but spending night and day in vehement and blood-thirsty search for them, to blot them out from off the face of the earth. His very life was their blood; “he breathed out threatenings and slaughter

“against the disciples of the Lord.” He had yet to learn that true religion cannot be spread by the sword, nor God’s cause advanced by deeds of violence. In later times Christians followed in his footsteps and tried to force men upon their knees by threatening the body with torture and with death. Truly, the confession of the lips may be wrung out by the human dread of agony, but the heart yields only to the gentle influence of the Spirit that comes like a dove in sweetness and in beauty, and not like the eagle in slaughter and in death.

St. Paul’s persecuting spirit was about to be changed ; he who was first in punishment and torture was to learn the power that wins by the eloquence of a warm and feeling heart. We may picture him on his way to Damascus. A sultry journey under a hot sun, between the mountains, the palm trees whispering in the gentle breeze. A martial band armed for deeds of violence and blood, their leader stern and unmoved, his gaze fixed upon that city, whence he would drag forth men and women, and offer them up, as he thought, an acceptable sacrifice to Jehovah. Weary with their journey, for the burning sand was beneath them, the welcome towers of the

ancient city rise full in view—the hot sun would soon be changed for the cool shade, and the burning sand for a cheerful resting place. So thought man! How unsearchable are Thy judgments, O God, and Thy ways past finding out!

At midday, above the dazzling glare of an Eastern sun, there was a light that quenched its brightness; the stern persecutor and his band fell upon their faces to the ground as the voice of our glorified Redeemer was heard in the solemn stillness, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me!" Then came that mysterious change which no man can understand any more than the coming and the going of the wind; "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but we cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The whole heart of the Apostle yielded to the call; the darkness of his soul vanished like the night before the dawn of the morning, for the light that shone above the brightness of the sun was the light of the world, and the voice was the voice of the true Shepherd to his wandering and wayward sheep. He was zealous still, but his zeal was now for his Redeemer; he was manly still, but his man-

hood was henceforth dedicated to the work of Christ, and inspired by the spirit of the Cross. He was zealous still for the honour of Jehovah, but he had learnt to know that Jehovah was one with Christ and His Spirit, the Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity. He was more learned than all the first pioneers of the Faith; but he consecrated his talents as a freewill offering to Heaven; he determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. His energy was not weakened, his ardour was not cooled; he laboured more than all to bring men to the foot of the Cross. He was faithful through trials and tears; through persecution, shame, and the scourge; faithful through the unfaithfulness of men and the treachery of friends. Faithful still as he was led to his martyr's death to win his martyr's crown, the blessed diadem of the faithful saints who have not given up the struggle when their hearts were faint and weary, and they felt the wounds of the powers of darkness, but have prayed and wrestled and won their prayer, "That they might be faithful unto death."

Though now, my brethren, there are no riven clouds, no floods of dazzling light, no mysterious

and audible voices summoning the sinner on his wilful journey to lay down his badly tempered weapons and to yield to Him who has conquered death and the grave; yet as surely, though inaudibly, is conveyed to each wanderer the summons to come home, the assurance that each sin is a persecution of the Lord of Glory who laid down His life to save us. The spiritual life now begins, as a rule, with the husbandman sowing the seed; the seed falls upon the good soil, and the dew and the light of Heaven cause it to bring forth fruit. But there are a thousand things to blight it before it becomes matured—thorns may grow up with it and choke it. Half a life given unto God, and the rest spent in idleness and infidelity, cannot win the crown that is given only to the fidelity that brings us in confidence to the brink of the grave, and then supports us across the last river and abides with us in the land of peace. “Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.”

And in order thus to continue in a life well begun, to be true to our colours, to cover them with our bodies, to die in their defence, we must *work* and *watch* and *pray*. We often hear those who seem to me to possess a counterfeit humility,

declare that they do not believe in works, that they are willing that Christ should do all, while they sit at His feet and worship. I do not believe in the exclusive power of works to save the soul, any more than I believe in a faith that has no works to show. The two are knit together beyond the power of human theories to tear them asunder. Faith is a beautiful tree, the loveliest upon earth. Its sap, which is love, runs along the trunk and fills every branch, so that its fragrance ascends like incense unto Heaven and is acceptable unto our Father, for His Son's sake. But a tree which is of God and is fed with the love of Christ cannot be barren; it must blossom with the loveliest flowers and bring forth the choicest fruit—fruit so good and holy that angels will sing its praises, and men will feed upon it as manna from Heaven; if there be no fruit, the tree is not nourished with the love of God; without works faith is dead.

But as we work we must watch—watch lest at night when we sleep, the enemy sow tares among our wheat. We must guard the entrance into our hearts that no evil thoughts cast out the Spirit of God whose temple the faithful are: we must guard the utterance of our lips lest we sin

by our words and put stumbling blocks in the way of our brethren. All the countless sins of the flesh are the devil's army which will creep upon us unawares and give us grievous wounds. We must stand upon the watch tower that Christ has given, that we may see them and know them as they come, and be prepared with the only armour that can shield the soul in the hour of its sorest need.

But the working and the watching are often wearying and painful. The pilgrim upon earth must feel that his home is not here, that he is passing on to a better land. The soul, in unfeigned and undoubted acknowledgment of the source from which it has sprung, must often look heavenward to its future home and seek communion with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, one God, dwelling in Majesty in our Father's house. The working and the watching are but half of that discipline of fidelity that is to lead us to victory—we must pray for the daily increasing perfection of every choice gift ; if we have any courage, any ardour, any virtue, we must own their source and strive for the Spirit's aid to bless them to the service of the great King. One would have thought that all men would

erly have clasped to their hearts the comfort-
: announcement that a way to the throne of
ir Father had been opened : that human
ces, speaking truthfully in the name of Christ,
uld be heard for His sake. With how many
t not the bounty and condescension of Divin-
despised and rejected by the thoughtlessness
l ingratitude of humanity—the one all love
l forgiveness, the other all arrogance and
f-sufficiency. God hath not appointed prayer
ause His eye cannot see our many necessities,
: behold the wish of the heart before it is
ered by the lip. Prayer is for our own good,
the everlasting welfare of our own souls,
ant day by day to strengthen and refresh the
th that sinks and dies without spiritual food.
yer is a priceless blessing, an inestimable
vilege, teaching us to know and to acknow-
ge that God in Christ is the willing bestower
every blessing that is ours. We poor sinful
atures of an hour, who have but a short time
live and are full of misery—“ who come up
nd are cut down like a flower, fleeing as it were
shadow and never continuing in one stay”—we
: permitted to join our voices with beings
lier and happier than we are, and He who

hears from Heaven his dwelling place is pledged to answer for the sake of Him who took upon Him the burden of our humanity, and breathed out his precious soul upon Calvary's mount.

And soon the working, and the watching, and the praying, the discipline of fidelity, come to an end. The faithful unto death are not disappointed; they have already as they lay a dying, a vision of the promised crown. The light of that crown, which is the light of the Lamb, sheds peace and beauty and never dying love upon all within the magic of its rays. It is the halo of the "faithful unto death" who are to meet all those who have gone before never to be parted again. The toil of weary years shall be forgotten in the thrill of universal joy, and gratitude shall flow from every soul among the redeemed in one grand song of eternal praise to God and the Lamb, who hath washed our scarlet sins and made them whiter than snow.

Surely this is worth working for, watching for, and praying for, this is worth living for and this is worth dying for. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

SERMON VIII.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY.

1 CORINTHIANS XIII. v. 13.

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

THE Epistle for to-day calls us to dwell upon these three exalted Christian graces—Faith, Hope, and Charity.

We cannot place too high a value upon living **Faith** which is one of the most beautiful of God's gifts to men. It is the spirit's eye, by the aid of which we can pierce through the veil of the flesh, and mount, as it were, upon eagles' wings far, far beyond the world. We can look back before the foundations of the world and believe in the existence of the Holy Trinity, who took counsel together ere they formed man out of the dust of the ground, and picture to ourselves the **Lamb** without blemish and without spot, slain

even then to save all men yet to be born. We can travel to the Holy Land where Christ was born, and wander beside the lake upon the shores of which He taught, and hear the murmuring of the waters, whose fury He stilled by the word of His power. We can behold our Elder Brother living and working among men, teaching them, healing them, blessing them. We can see the heart of the mourner leap for joy, the widow made glad as He restored her only son, and bright light beam once more in the eyes of the blind. We may go with the Saviour through the weary years of His pilgrimage to the garden of Gethsemane, where His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. We may follow Him to the lonely wilderness where the tempter tried His faith—to the grave of Lazarus where He wept ; we may see the treacherous kiss of Judas : the purple robe of scorn, the wounds and thorny crown, and the stone that sealed the grave where no man had yet been laid. And then comes the glorious resurrection, the everlasting victory over death, and hell, and the grave, the ascension into Heaven, where He who suffered all things for us, now sitteth at the right hand of the Father clothed in glorious majesty for ever. We can

behold all this by the far seeing eye of Faith, and we can believe it in our inmost hearts, making every truth a part and parcel of our life and the comfort of our death, knowing that this mighty work was wrought for each one of us to save us from bitter woe.

Faith is indeed a lovely gift of Heaven, powerful even to remove mountains and to cast them into the sea, and yet the Apostle tells us that though we have it all and are without Charity, which is love, we are nothing.

And closely joined to Faith stands her sister Hope; for the blessings we believe in, we also hope for. We believe in the union of all followers of the Cross in Heaven, and we hope to join them. We believe in the resurrection, and we live in sure and certain hope that God will raise our bodies from the grave. We believe in the end of all pain, and we hope hereafter to be among the number of those whose tears the Lord shall wipe away. In all the sorrows of life Hope is one of the surest and truest comforters. If we part from some dear friend whose heart has been linked long and lovingly with ours, Hope smiles through our tears and whispers that we may meet again. We undertake every difficult task

in life because Hope cheers us on with the bright promise of success. The warrior goes to battle with the Hope of victory, and the green turf is laid upon the grave in sure and certain Hope that our brother shall rise again. Without it life would be dreary and death would be gloomy, and yet bright and glorious and comforting as it is, it is not the loveliest of the lovely gifts of God, for the Spirit by St. Paul hath declared, "Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity."

The Holy Apostle, who himself worked out the whole spirit of his teaching and laboured lovingly for his fellows, till martyrdom ended his life, uses the strongest language, the most emphatic words. There seems to be no doubt about the matter in his mind—he delivers unto us a clear and evident revelation given unto him by God. We may speak every language under the sun, know even how the angels make their thoughts known to one another and sing the praises of their King, and yet if Charity, which is love, find no place in our hearts, we are become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. We may be able to fall into a trance, like Balaam of old, and see all the events of the future years of

our life, and even far beyond that. We may understand all those mysteries that now God hath been pleased to withhold ; we may know all things and be wiser than Solomon ; we may labour more than all men and be without spot and blemish before the world ; we may even give our bodies to be burned for the Faith, and yet, for all that, if there still be wanting Charity, every other bright advantage becomes as nothing ; all the good we can do, all the prayers we can say, all the praises we can sing are of no avail without that one thing needful, without which it is impossible to win the crown of life which the Saviour hath prepared in Heaven for those who love Him upon earth.

Even that kind and loving feeling which dwells in the hearts of the followers of the world, untouched by the grace of God, is an unspeakable blessing, beautiful wherever it is found. It is the first thing that meets us as we enter upon life. Where should we be were it not for loving hands to care for our many wants as we lie in helpless infancy ? And as years roll on we are still dependent upon each other, claiming the exercise of that Charity which God, who is love, hath planted in the heart. It seems to be

a law which can never be broken that we should be united together in the strong bonds of a common brotherhood. The exile who sees none of his kith and kin is heavy hearted, sighing for the house of his fathers. The man who is shut up alone in a dungeon with no friendly hand to grasp, becomes silent and sorrowful and ends his days a madman. And there are countless emblems in nature which teach the same lesson of the same loving God. "The fountains mingle with the rivers, and rivers run down to the ocean, and join water to water. The winds of Heaven seem whispering together as they murmur in the trees. The mountains tower upwards in their majestic height as if they would kiss the heavens, and many lovely blossoms are grouped together on the same stem." It is a law Divine that nothing should stand alone. We all need each other's love and each other's helping hand. It is this kind loving sympathy that takes the heaviest burden of sorrow from the heart, next only to that love which prompted a Saviour to die a cruel death and lay down His life for His brethren.

But the love and charity of the natural heart must be purified by the Spirit of Christ and

thus brought nearer to the grand model of our lives. All distinctions of family and fortune are blotted out. As members of the Christian family, the same blood, as it were, runs in our veins. We are all born again. God becomes our Father ; Christ our Elder Brother. We are all members of the same body into which we have all been baptized by the same Spirit ; we are united as sheep in one fold, under one Shepherd ; we are all partakers of one bread and one cup in the blessed Sacrament ; we have all one faith and one hope—one home hereafter prepared by one Lord. “ We must be of one heart and one soul, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, walking by the same rule and minding the same thing : all living with this one aim that with one mind and one mouth we may glorify God.”

But there is yet one more reason why Charity, which is love, bursting forth into kind and noble deeds, seems to have been counted by the Apostle as the loveliest of the Christian gifts. Faith cannot last for ever. It is a blessing now while we see through a glass darkly, our eyes covered with a mist ; but when we see clearly every object of our belief, behold face to face the

glory of that God, the blessed Trinity in Unity, who made us and redeemed us, and is leading us home again after our many wanderings—then Faith, having been our friend to the very brink of the grave, will leave us altogether, swallowed up in the perfect enjoyment of the presence of God. And Hope will have fulfilled her mission of comfort and will leave us. Everything we had longed for will be ours for the sake of the Cross, if only we have been faithful and honourable soldiers of Christ to the last hour of our lives. But Charity, which is love, has no end either in this world or that which is to come. Having done its work upon earth it goes with the Christian into Heaven and unites the Church triumphant by a bond that never can be broken.

Now that the season of Lent—the season of humiliation and self examination—is once more coming upon us ; let us pray, brethren, that the grounds of our Faith in the blessed Trinity may be sure and steadfast ; that our Hope in the resurrection to eternal life may be firmly fixed upon the rock of ages ; that our Charity may be like that of our Redeemer, whose human heart burned with human sympathy, who laboured, and prayed, and suffered, that He

might shower blessing after blessing upon the race He had adopted, and might knit them together in one brotherhood, whose mark and badge should be that abiding Charity which is able to cover a multitude of sins.

SERMON IX.

(ASH WEDNESDAY.)

THE DISHONOURED BIRTHRIGHT.

HEBREWS, xii. 17.

“ For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”

AFFECTING indeed must have been that ceremony in the early ages of the Christian Church, at the commencement of the solemn season of Lent, which brought crowds of penitents, bareheaded, barefooted and clothed in sackcloth, into the presence of Christ's ministers to confess their sins, and in token of humiliation, to cover their heads with ashes. They were put to open penance in this world, that their souls, being awakened and humbled, might be converted and saved, through faith, in the day of the Lord. This surely brings to mind the leper, shut out from the chosen congregation; bearing about his body the emblems of death—to be restored to spiritual communion and fellowship with his brethren by

the visible ceremonies of the law, and gifts offered by the hands of the appointed priest. We read in the service this morning, that it is much to be wished that this godly discipline should be restored : not indeed restored with the abuses that grew upon it, the hypocrisy of false penitents, and the wickedness of impure priests : the outward profession of repentance while the heart was hardened in all the meanness of hypocrisy—the priest induced to pronounce the words of absolution as a mere form for the sake of worldly gain. If it be desirable that such outward discipline should be revived in the Church of Christ, there must come with it too, the spirit of contrite penitence and heartfelt humiliation, the spirit that looks upon the cross of Jesus with thrilling frame and tearful eye, beholding there the wounds of the Son of Man, whose precious blood our sins have caused to flow. All outward ceremony is vain indeed without the corresponding motion of the contrite heart ! Cries for mercy from the lip alone fall upon the ear of the all-seeing Father, like arrows upon a shield of steel : the declaration of absolution by ten thousand priests can have no weight unless the great High Priest Himself apply it to the broken heart whose

sorrow he knows to be godly ; with the outward prostration of the body we ask now for the true humiliation of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit ; instead of the sprinkling of the ashes of burnt palm leaves, we ask for the sins of the past laid aside, once and for ever burnt up and destroyed, and a new and more spiritual building erected, through the Holy Ghost, on our former selves. Blessed, indeed, be God our Father that it is possible to cast the past far, far behind us ; to begin life anew with fresh spiritual vigour, with quickened energy and stronger love, to confess our sins to One who knows all our weaknesses and temptations, and has the power to forgive.

My brethren in Christ, a whole year has passed away since, in the name of the Church, I called upon you to examine your lives and humble yourselves before God in penitence and prayer during the solemn season of Lent. Much has happened since last Ash Wednesday ; some have gone away for a time, and some have gone for ever ; but upon all of us, the living and the dead, last Lent must have had an influence for evil or for good. Oh ! who can rightly estimate the guilt which throws away in contempt the

opportunities for good which our Father gives us? As our life passes swiftly on and we hasten to the grave, every season has its work—its work of love, and penitence, and prayer; to neglect that work is like taking the gifts of a generous benefactor and casting them cruelly back into his face. It is sad to think how many are living careless, thoughtless lives, caring little for the Church and her seasons, her countless invitations, her offers of strength through her Divine Head, Christ Jesus. I take it for granted that our presence here is because we are not careless about the affairs of our souls; that we are longing for pardon: that we are indeed humbled before the Cross of Calvary. Of all the sad, sad warnings in God's revealed word, there is none more startling than that which is brought to our minds by the words which I have just read to you from the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. That chapter has been chosen as one of the lessons of the day to stir us up to heartfelt penitence, lest we be left in loneliness like Esau, crying by his father's dying bed for the blessing that had gone from him for ever. "For ye know that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance

“though he sought it carefully with tears!” He like Adam, cast out from the lovely paradise where all was light and beauty : where nature cast around him her rich bounty, laying her choice gifts at his feet in generous plenty : where all was innocence and purity, which in themselves are inconceivable happiness which the guilty can never comprehend : Esau was like Adam, shut out from all that he loved—sent forth to till the ground, to sorrow and to die. He was like, too, those five foolish virgins prostrate in loneliness without the marriage chamber—his cry was like their cry in its heart-rending earnestness, “ Lord “ Lord, open unto us.” Too late ! too late now to welcome the Bridegroom, to witness the marriage, to present the wedding gifts. No light ! the oil is gone, the day of mercy is past, and what might have been accepted penitence and heartfelt contrition, is turned into unavailing remorse and bitter despair. Oh ! now, my brethren, is our time to kneel before our Father for the blessing of forgiveness, “ Bless me, even me also, Oh ! my “ Father.” We must not postpone it to the dying bed, when the limbs are weak and the vision dim ; we must not postpone it till the Bridegroom comes and the door is shut. Once more the Church

proclaims to us, "*now* is the accepted time." Now, in this season of Lent, let her voice be heard for she is authorized to speak by her Divine Head. From the earliest ages Christians have been called upon to examine themselves to see how far they have despised their birthright, how far they have forfeited their blessing! Who amongst us can say that he has loved and cherished his birthright and guarded it with his life; looking upon it as a priceless gift that he has been admitted into the ark of Christ's Church, born again in the baptism of water and the Holy Ghost? Who can say that by virtue of his fidelity he can claim the blessing as his due and just reward? No, it is as suppliants that we must come kneeling in lowliness before a justly offended God; we must come like the prodigal with confession of unworthiness, with resolve to amend; "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son." There is no place in the Christian temple for the Jewish Pharisee proclaiming his virtues and boasting of his piety; human merit of any kind—except so far as it is a reflection from that boundless store of holy virtue which brightly shone in the life of Jesus—human

merit has no place any where in the Christian Creed ; come here as the Pharisee in pride, and no sweet sense of forgiveness and justification shall return with you home to lighten your cares and brighten your fireside ; come here as the Pharisee without a deep sense of sin, and with no longing for pardon, and you shall return home as you came, living unto yourself and not unto the God who redeemed you. Afflictions will be hard to bear and lose the refining power with which they are invested by the Christian's God ; death will be nothing to you but the dreadful reality of the body's decay—not the exaltation of the real man to a higher and nobler existence. But come in the spirit of the Publican, smiting upon his breast and saying, with downcast eyes " God be merciful to me a sinner." To such a spirit is surely promised Heaven's choicest gifts ; not indeed freedom from sorrow and pain, but power to bear them ; not exemption from falling, but the promise of a Saviour's hand to help you up ; not the banishment of death, but strong living faith, and power to see in his summons the call to glory, and in the closing of the body's eye the end of all pain.

May this Lent bring to us all a rich harvest of

forgiveness. If there be any here whose spirits are not broken and contrite, who do not repent of their many sins, remember, a day will come when you will long earnestly for the time that is past, that you may fall upon your knees and sue for the coveted blessing ; remember Esau who was rejected, who "found no place of repentance though he sought it carefully with tears." True godly repentance is something to be prayed for ardently with the whole power of the spirit ; it does not come in a moment in answer to the passing longing of the troubled heart ; it does not consist in the exceeding bitter cry of the disappointed man ; these feelings are experienced by many a godless man as his sins overtake him, and overwhelm him with remorse ; remorse is not repentance ; but repentance is that godly sorrow, which mourns over our sins as the acts of traitors to their God, and sees in each one a nail in the body of the Lord, and a thorn in His bleeding brow ; it is the resolve to cast them all aside by the aid of that light which shines from Calvary, and to begin a new life in Christ Jesus our Redeemer. May such repentance be yours and mine.

Let not the words of the text discourage any

who are struggling manfully against the burden of sin, willing to claim eagerly all the privilege of the Christian seasons as certain means of living and purifying discipline. Esau truly for ever rejected as heir to the honours of first-born ; the peculiar blessings of his birthright were far out of his reach, never to be regained ; but by a life of devotion to God he might still retain a place among the sons of hope to live hereafter in the light of the Father's love. There may be some blessings, which as life rolls on, are torn from our grasp, and lead us to weep in bitter anguish ; but, if each time they fall, we seize the hand of Jesus, and gaze upon His Cross with our streaming eyes, He is ready to raise us out of the mire, and whisper to us the sweet mercy of His ever-abiding promise of a place somewhere within the courts of His heavenly home. To be with Him will be enough after the Lenten discipline of this life of conflict with alternate victory and defeat, to be with Him will be the brightness and the fulness of Eternal Joy.

SERMON X.

(LENT.)

GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF OUR TROUBLES.

PSALM CXXXII. 1. (*Prayer Book Version.*)

“Lord, remember David and all his trouble.”

THE psalms of David, in all the grandeur of their jubilant poetry, and the pathos of their contrite penitence, present to the whole human race a manual of devotion exactly suited to the many wants of the human heart. Perhaps they are the strongest and most comforting when they put into the believer's mouth the means of pouring forth, in inspired language, the many troubles that so often darken the sunshine of his life.

No mere worldling, indeed, living beneath the unwholesome fascination of society's pleasures as the joy of his soul, can appreciate the spirit of one whose attitude towards his maker was that of reverent submission; who felt the inward

depravity of the fallen human heart not merely as a fact to be struggled against for purity's sake, but one to be sorrowed and wept over as an offence against a personal loving God who was ever longing to restore him to his home. Society, indeed, frowns upon countless sins as offences against the respectability which she worships : but the Christian, meditating on the backslidings of his life, beholds the Cross of Calvary, and mourns to know that his sins have placed upon it the sinless representative of his race and pierced His feet and hands with bleeding wounds.

If the Psalmist of Israel, with the faint glimmering of light shining upon him through the spirit of prophecy from the hills of Bethlehem ; with but a faint echo of the angels' song reaching his ears through the same power ; if he thus comparatively in darkness and silence could still experience the true spirit of penitence and humiliation ; how can we raise our heads as our misdoings roll before us like the tide ; when we have full in view the proofs incontrovertible of the sorrows of Jesus, whose life on earth and death upon the cross were the consequence of the guilty stains that darken our souls !

Nothing else can produce the contrite heart that God will not despise : we may sigh as our pride is wounded and our purity is sullied : we may complain as our self-respect is humbled in the dust, and we fall from the standard which exalted human nature may have pictured and cherished : but just as every prayer to ascend from earth and penetrate to the throne of the Father must be purified by the name of Jesus and offered in the golden censer ; so must the contrite heart be won through Calvary's cross—through humiliation and sorrow for the part we have taken in the mixing of that bitter cup which was drained to the dregs by the suffering Son of Man.

“ Lord, remember David and all his trouble :”
remember him now sighing at the thought that he is not worthy to build Thy temple, the glory and grandeur of which have been the cherished day-dream of his life : in sorrow for the unaccepted oath his hands were too impure to fulfil :
“ I will not come within the tabernacle of mine
“ house, nor climb up into my bed ; I will not
“ suffer mine eyes to sleep nor mine eyelids to
“ slumber, neither the temples of my head to
“ take any rest, until I find out a place for the

“temple of the Lord, an habitation for the mighty “God of Jacob.” Remember him disappointed at his own weakness which has accumulated misfortunes on his head as his life is ending: remember him as he remembers in sorrow hopes never crowned with realization, and noble aspirations trampled in the dust: a glorious beginning almost obliterated by subsequent failures, but leaving him still the power and the longing to throw himself upon thy mercy that his sins may be forgiven and for ever forgotten. “Lord, “remember David and all his trouble.” And surely this ardent supplication of the penitent king is the true voice of all human nature sighing beneath its weight of woe; the instinct to cry unto some higher power to pity and to help is as firmly planted in the human breast as that mysterious longing which binds man unto man with the cords of human love; the Heathen, ignorant of Him to whom he cries, thus sues for merciful remembrance at the hands of “The unknown God.” In the hour of his desolation and loneliness, his gaze, too, is turned upward, to seek for favour with a deity whom nature has taught him to look upon as omnipotent.

But the ignorance and the darkness of the

Heathen, and the comparative twilight of the Jewish king have passed for us into the bright and inextinguishable light of the Gospel of Christ. It cannot be now with any uncertainty as to whom we pray for mercy, that we lift up our voices in the hour of our need : unlike David, we have something to present with our prayers which renders them an acceptable sacrifice to the Father. What a grand and glorious difference do a few words make in each supplication of the believing and penitent heart ; the utterance of the human lip all weighted and defiled by a thousand sins, purified with the charm that Heaven has revealed, has power to penetrate to the throne of God. Those few words, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord," added to each prayer in sincerity of heart, surely place before the Father the strongest plea for mercy : they bring before Him that spotless life of obedience, purity and prayer : that death of desolation and cry of agony : the whole scheme of man's redemption from the cradle to the grave of the Son of Man which has power to throw open the closed gates of Paradise, and restore to us our purity in the second Adam.

Surely each individual soul here can take up

the words of the shepherd king—"Lord, remember me and all my troubles." That long list of cares and troubles and heartaches which are caused by that inherent disposition to sin, which is transmitted with unailing power from father to son and increased and intensified a thousand fold by the faults and failures of our daily life.

Each member of the Church of Christ is solemnly entreated at this season of humiliation, to dive deeply into the hidden secrets of his own soul ; to lay bare before the all-merciful Father the troubles that hinder his spiritual progress and bind him to this fleeting earth when his gaze should be turned Heavenward to his purchased home.

The great lessons of the Church of Christ now are confession and penitence. Confession, with the heart bowed down, feeling the bitter power of each individual sin to corrupt and to banish from the Father's presence: not indeed a mere catalogue of transgressions registered in heartless words, the spiritless discharge of a fancied duty; but the veritable outpouring of the whole man, mourning over his impurity and resolving by the power of the Cross to cast it away for ever.

The world may sneer at the penitent on his

knees, declaring that it is a superfluous work to recount his errors unto one who has noted them already in his book : as well might it sneer at the voice of prayer which asks at the hands of our loving Father every blessing that we long for, when we feel that He knows already all that is necessary for our struggling souls and weak and weary bodies. It is enough for us that the Divine Head and his Apostles have bid us confess that the great high priest may absolve : it is enough that they have bid us ask that the Father of mercies may freely bestow ; if we are to question where God has commanded, as well might we doubt the whole scheme of redemption and cavil at the mystery of the Cross.

The discipline of truthful confession is good for each sinning soul ; the laying bare of each wound and bruise and sore opens out fully the depravity of the human heart, and the strength of those mysterious legions that are arrayed in bitter enmity against it. Who can begin to confess without shuddering at his countless omissions and commissions against the law of purity in thought word and deed ! And as he shudders at his own depravity there comes within the longing for a holier life and the firm clinging

unto the physician that has power to heal. And then come the penitential tears flowing from the contrite heart which God can never despise ; it is when we are thus humbled in the dust that the forgiving Father takes us by the hand to raise us to a purer life : we feel the justification of the publican who smote upon his breast crying " God be merciful to me a sinner." We have the welcome of the prodigal to his father's arms, and catch, even while upon earth the echo of that Heavenly anthem which angels sing, when waudering sheep return to the shepherd's fold. " Lord, remember me and all my trouble—my " temptations, trials, sins, confession, penitence; " remember my shortcomings now and forgive " them in love, and then in the world to come, " for the sake of Thy Son, remember them no " more."

SERMON XI.

(LENT.)

OUR SECRET FAULTS.

PSALM XIX., part of verse 12.

“Cleanse thou me from my secret faults!”

WHEN once we become conscious of the reality of the Christian warfare: conscious of the hard struggle that is daily carried on by the soul seeking after purity: conscious of evil struggling with good: of passion resisting grace: of humanity in opposition to Divinity: we become conscious also that we have no chance of victory unaided and alone, that we must seek ardently for help from Him who alone has the power to overcome. We become conscious also that there are two distinct classes of sins against which we have to contend: that there are open breaches of the Divine Law committed before the eyes of the world; and also secret transgressions of its purity; that we are living two lives distinct in

their character and their influence on the soul : one beneath the eyes of our fellow men for whose favourable verdict we are toiling, and one in the presence of an Almighty Being, the reality of whose power and existence appeals to our faith and not to our human sight. Would that all of us could allow only its just value to the opinion of our brethren in the flesh. Surely the Christian pilgrim is not toiling for the incense of worldly approbation, fearing only the sins against society's laws, transgressions of society's conventionalities and proprieties. The man of the world slaving to win the smile of a fickle crowd and sighing after popularity : compromising principle for the sake of peace : courting the titled and the powerful, and winking at their shameless breaches of the law of purity, he surely is no pleasing picture for the Christian to contemplate ; no enviable example for the Christian to follow. Watch him on to the later years of his life, as his friends fall away one by one, as his flimsy pleasures and questionable recreations lose their power to please, their charm to fascinate : follow him as the indefinable feeling of growing years casts about him the shadow of his coming dissolution ; watch

him as his ear seems to catch the sound of voices uttered in another country, which whisper of another life into which his soul will pass when the body dies ; watch him as all his ambition ends in the grave, and say shall the Christian follow in his steps ? His life has been out in the world, he has won the prize that he toiled for ; but the fruit is bitter. He is striving at the last, in a few short hours, to gain what saints and martyrs have only been able to win by lifelong devotion to the Cross, with the body in full subjection to the law of the Spirit, a tabernacle only to dwell in, and not an abode of everlasting peace and rest. Better far to be the poorest outcast that ever sighed beneath the burden of his poverty ; better to be torn from kith and kin, one to whom the joys of home's affections are unknown, from whom the world turns away, than to be courted and favoured and pampered with every wish gratified and anticipated ; but without any consciousness of the reality of that inner life of the soul which makes us sensible of communion with a Father above, and assures us that we are His children for whom He cares. Once we become conscious of our adoption through Christ into God's own family, once we

become conscious of the reality of the brotherhood of Jesus, won for us by His life of obedience and His death of agony—then can we realize that we are but pilgrims and strangers here, citizens of another country, all to be worshippers hereafter in another and a holier temple, whose light is the Lamb. Beneath that light we place our sin-stricken struggling souls in humiliation and sorrow: the beams that fall upon them disclose the impurity with which the earth surrounds them: we kneel alone before our Father. Here the world must not enter to witness our contrition or to lessen its intensity; the world cannot understand our pleading and our tears. The transgressions we are bewailing are not against the world's laws, nor written in the world's catalogue; we are alone with God. The spirit of the Psalmist must enter into us as we lift up our voices and utter his words, "Oh cleanse thou me from my secret faults." Secret! Yes! and hidden cleverly from our fathers, and mothers, and friends—known not even to the spirit knit most closely to our own. Who knows as we kneel here that our thoughts are straying away to scenes of pleasure or of pain; that we are still on earth when earth

should be forgotten? Who knows, as our voices are singing praises for redemption, that our hearts are not dwelling on the triumph of the Cross? Who knows that when we hear God's word read, we are criticizing the voice and the reading, and not listening with our souls to the teaching of inspiration? Who knows that when we kneel before God's altar and eat the bread and drink the wine, we have not laid aside the world and its seductions, that we are not absorbed in the reality and blessedness of the Divine feast? Who knows the secret murmurings and rebellions of the heart against our daily lot; secret dissatisfaction with blessings which we do not care to have, and which, nevertheless, are the best for the soul's discipline and culture? Who sees the unuttered thought which longs for the breaking asunder of existing ties and the banishment of existing claims, that others may be formed and cherished more pleasing to the carnal nature? Are there not thousands now in the world with fair reputations and honourable names, who are living in the light of outward respectability only: who follow the laws of the Church and listen to her teaching simply because society has been pleased to smile upon her with

its worthless smile of approbation: with but little jealousy for her honour, or real devotion to her cause; losing sight of the fact that the Church is divine, that she is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, and that hereafter she shall be united to her Lord, and cease her warfare. Take but one day in any man's life: let him write down every thought that passes through his busy brain, every word that escapes his lips, every action that is not prompted by a holy motive, every dwelling of his mind upon unholy memories, every sigh after things that would lead him into the wilderness far from his God; let him write but the history of his soul's life for but one short day, and He would hide it from the gaze of his fellow man, and blush if he dreamt he knew it. Well may we all pray to our forgiving Father to cleanse us from our secret sins. He knows them, one by one, as they come to defile the soul; sins that we cannot pour out into human ears, we may freely confess to Him. Just as no kind earthly father would turn his boy away, when he returned with confession and penitence, after wandering from his home; so now, the cry to cleanse the soul from secret sins awakens Heaven's sympathy

for the struggling pilgrim ; by the help of the all-discerning Spirit we shall find them all, not one shall escape us ; none shall lurk and hide about our souls, waiting for the moment of weakness, to attack us with the full power of temptation. May the Lord Jesus Christ and His Spirit so send to us the power of self-examination, of severe and relentless scrutiny over our thoughts, and words, and works, whether open before the world, or secret and known only to the Father, that we may be cleansed from our sins upon earth, and through the Blessed Redeemer be at rest hereafter, where sin can never come.

And shall the knowledge that the secret recesses of the soul can be penetrated by the all-seeing Eye of God fill our hearts with fear ? Shall we tremble at the conviction that our secret faults are no secrets with the ever-present Jehovah ? Yes, indeed, if we are not striving to cast out all that is impure from the inner shrine, to overturn the tables of the money-changers in the courts of the soul's consecrated temple ; if we are not fighting hard for the victory of purity, well may we tremble before the gaze of the Almighty. But if we are honourably fighting

beneath the Cross our banner, contending nobly for the cause of the Captain of our Salvation, comfort comes in royal plenty at the thought that the judge of the conflict and the rewarder of the victor is Jesus the Incarnate God. I may well rejoice if I am an honest and faithful soldier—I have the Captain's sympathy and the Captain's help. If I fall from time to time He can mark my eagerness to seize His pierced hand that I may rise again : He can behold my sincere loathing for the dreaded impurity that for a season casts me down. As He beholds my secret struggle with my secret faults, He can and does send me secret help by the invisible hands of the Holy Angels.

SERMON XII.

(LENT.)

OUR SINS OF THOUGHT.

ACTS VIII. 22.

“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.”

I HAVE chosen these remarkable words of St. Peter as the key note of our meditations to-day, because they bring vividly before us the fact that not only in word and in deed, but in thought also, we can transgress the commandments of the Lord.

It was said by David, who knew the springs of human action, and the deep mysteries of the human heart; it was said by him, that “we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.”

Wonderful, indeed, is the power of thought, which is nature’s gift to every human mind; by its aid we can take example by the past, and ponder over the fate of nations and individuals

that have lived and died, leaving "their foot-prints in the sands of time."

"Thought is the life-blood of the soul ; often "is the tongue silent, and the body at rest ; "but thought is busy still ; it courses, like the "blood in our veins, with ceaseless activity along "the passages of the soul ;" it yields companionship to the poorest inmate of the village cottage, as well as to the rich and learned and the inmates of palaces ; by its power we retire into ourselves, and reign supreme over our little empire, wherein none amongst our fellows can enter.

If we would discover whether or no we have the true spirit of the Christian pilgrim, toiling for the reward to be won hereafter, and enjoyed in the royal City, not made with hands eternal in the heavens ; if we would discover whether or no we have cherished and nurtured the grace given unto us, when the sign of the Cross was marked upon our brow, we may not judge by our acts alone ; they are done in the sight of approving friends, and before the world, which smiles and carresses and tempts us with its flattery ; we may not judge by our words alone, which are often the result of society's laws, uttered in obedience

to society's custom. But our thoughts! what are they?

Now as nature is beginning to smile upon us again, and to clothe herself once more in vernal beauty; as we enjoy that beauty, do our thoughts mount to the Giver of all good things—the Author of nature's sublimest wonders; do they rise upwards towards the attributes of God—towards the person, the majesty, the sufferings, the work, the promises of our blessed Lord; towards our own spiritual condition, our hopes and our fears, our ever-approaching eternity? Or are our thoughts for ever dwelling upon the fleeting joys of worldly life; plans of business and of pleasure, anxieties to please and efforts to conquer?

As thought passes in one continual current through the soul, is there nothing to be seen or heard but voices and faces of this corrupting earth? As the angels whisper their call to holiness, are they rejected and despised; will the soul never dwell in rapture upon that divine music, whose echoes we cannot fail to catch, the music of Heaven's unselfish hosts as sinners turn to God?

Would we all had an ever-abiding, keen-sighted conviction that our Father "is about our

“bed and about our path;” a conviction by night and by day that He is the Companion of our thoughts, sharing with us our inner life.

Would that our faith were strong enough to behold the Saviour Himself interceding, working, pleading by His spirit; and sorrowing too, as each wilful soul opens the door to sinful suggestions and meditations which have power to expel Him from His temple.

Each deliberate thought of sin defiles the purity of the soul's secret life; indulged and caressed, it grows and spreads its corruption. “The Christian soul is a temple,” says one of the Church's boldest champions; “the Christian soul is a temple; why then is the inner shrine polluted by the imagery of evil? Why do the tables of the money changers disfigure the outer courts? Why are the five senses—the gates of the temple—so open to all thoughts and spirits who would pass within? The Christian soul is a temple; why make we not a covenant with our eyes, lest they admit ought that may soil its purity? With our ears, lest they give access to voices that jar upon the harmonies of the inmost shrine; why strive we not with the Apostle in prayer that our whole spirit, and soul, and body,

“be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, so glorifying God in our bodies and our spirits which are alike His own.”

We must repent and mourn over our daily and hourly departures from the law of purity, and pray God if perhaps the thoughts of our hearts may be forgiven us. This surely should be our daily supplication to the God of mercy. The thoughts of our hearts need all the forbearance and long-suffering that Calvary's sacrifice could win. Where is that never-dying Christian grace which clothes the soul in beauty? Where is the charity that thinketh no evil? We dwell upon the sins and faults of others; to think of their departure from the path of rectitude, of the spots and stains upon their reputation, is often the keenest of keen delights; many of us draw comparisons between our own observance of religion, and the short-comings of our neighbours; the Pharisee is still walking amongst us in all the ugliness of his spiritual pride; he stands up within the temple of his own soul, and congratulates himself that he is not as other men are.

We want the spirit of the Publican, who smote upon his breast, and cried in humiliation, banishing

from his thoughts the contemplation of all sin but his own, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Thoughts of impurity, too, that invade the soul like a mighty flood, and tear it from its anchor ; we must pray to God, if perhaps these thoughts of our hearts may be forgiven us. They are the most dangerous and soul-destroying in the dark and gloomy catalogue. 'Tis madness to play with them, 'tis destruction to court them. Many and many a man now is drawing near to the grave, having spent but half the allotted life of man upon earth, feeble in frame, crushed and desponding in spirit, who would give worlds if he had stifled the first whisper of impurity that lured him away, if only he had had the courage and manliness to deny himself the lesser for the greater blessing ; the courage to fall down upon his knees, and plead earnestly for the spirit of self-surrender to the unchangeable law of purity.

Thoughts of infidelity, too, which lead us lazily to dream over things as we fancy they ought to be, instead of manfully taking them as they really are ; the finite mind sitting arrogantly in judgment upon the revelations of Divinity.

In these days of increasing light, amidst the labours of God-loving scholars, there is no place

for ignorance, no excuse for the servant who knows not his master's will.

If the soul is to live hereafter, the question of its happy or miserable existence is not to be solved by indolent contemplation ; as our thoughts dwell upon its origin and destiny without an effort to push forward into light and truth, we bring upon ourselves the reproof and warning of St. Peter to Simon the sorcerer, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."

There is nothing for it, as evil comes before us, as come it will, there is nothing for it, but to rush to prayer, to plead and wrestle for the armour to defend us.

It is the first whisper we have the power to crush ; the infant thought we can trample on and destroy. We must not stand idly by, as it grows and eats our life away. In the very midst of our business and our pleasure we still can pray ; surely the soul that lives in the conviction that the Father is more ready to hear than His children to pray can dart one quick glance to Heaven and pray earnestly, though the tongue utter no word ; these unuttered supplications of

the spirit have power to reach the Saviour of mankind.

The true voice of the heart's deep agony, wrung from it by the felt presence of the tempter, and the sense of its own abject weakness, must ever be heard by the Friend of sinners. "Can He from whose temples the precious blood was pressed by the crown of thorns ; can He, whose human soul was poured forth in agony beneath the olive trees of Gethsemane in expiation of our sins of thought, can He turn a deaf ear to the fainting spirit which He has redeemed, when the phantoms of evil haunt it, when the enemy threatens it with death."

Rather does the believer clasp to his heart the certainty of willingness and power to save ; His voice sounds lovingly from the age of prophecy, and promises salvation ; "Fear not : for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." (Isaiah xliii., verses 1 and 2.)

SERMON XIII.

LENT (REFRESHMENT SUNDAY.)

THE SOUL'S DIVINE FOOD.

ST. JOHN VI. part of v. 14.

“This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”

THIS, then, was the verdict of those who beheld and participated in the miraculous feeding of the five thousand ; and are we not all, members of the Church of Christ, are we not all like that company passing through the desert, waiting to be fed ? Every soul calls aloud for something beyond and above itself, to satisfy its craving, to appease its hunger. And whence shall we buy bread that we may eat ?

This question has been asked, in every age of the world, by anxious human hearts. Often and often have men tried to answer it for themselves and have miserably failed. Millions have mistaken the objects on which ought to be set the heart's best affections. The Heathen of old were for ever stumbling in the dim light which un-

aided nature could shed upon their path: they misunderstood the loving attributes of God and the needs of their own sin-stricken souls.

The Jews, too, in the brighter light of a partial revelation from Heaven were for ever mistaking the purposes of their Divine King. They misunderstood the words of inspired prophets singing to them in love of the glories of Redemption through the lowly Messiah. They sought for food in the outward observances of an empty lip-service, and missed the meaning and the benefit of every sacrifice.

And still remains for us the same question—"Whence shall we buy bread that we may eat?" How many out in the world are trying to answer it for themselves, and are seeking their sustenance in unwholesome food, which has but little power to satisfy, even the human mind, save for a fleeting moment.

There are many, alas! who forget that their souls are in sore need of life-giving food, and that it ought to be the purpose of their lives to satisfy the mighty craving. They seem for ever bent upon cultivating their minds and blindly measure their manhood by the power of the brain: they seek ardently for knowledge and

fancy that it is food enough. A great and priceless blessing, indeed, it is to have a bright intellect and a mind stored with knowledge: such gifts dedicated unto God, for ever ennoble and purify the man who possesses them: but while we feed our minds we must not leave our souls to starve, for they must either be lost hereafter for ever, or live in the light of Divine Love. How many, too, are enveloped in an atmosphere of dissipation—living in the giddiness of worldly pleasure, alike forgetting the cultivation of the mind and the soul, satisfied if the blood that flows through the limbs be daily made to glow by the gratification of the human will and the human passions. The soul can never be fed by this food—its origin and its destiny shut it out for ever from any participation in ungodly joys. We must not buy this bread, for the soul can never feed upon it.

Countless as are the souls whom God has created; some now resting without the burden of the body, waiting to be reunited and perfected in the glorified manhood; some still working and struggling in the tabernacle of flesh, and sore let and hindered by the weakness of the flesh; countless as they are there is but

one food—but one bread and but one wine to appease their hunger and their thirst. Various, indeed, is the human mind—various as the leaves of the forest in their colour and their form : some minds have mighty power and grasp, great in learning and literature : some just force enough to take their place above the instinct of the creatures below them. But the soul of the grandest scholar that ever acquired for his own the learning of generations, and the soul of the humblest and poorest among unlettered humanity, must eat of the same bread if they would pass safely through the wilderness to partake of the banquet in the heavenly city.

And the bread that came down from heaven expressly that every soul might eat has not only power to sustain life but power to heal wounds. The human soul is not only hungry and thirsty, but it has been bruised and beaten in a deadly fight, and it is bleeding and weary ; its sad and lonely lot is well described by one who felt keenly the truth of his own beautiful words :—

“ I was a stricken deer that left the herd
Long since ; with many an arrow deep infixt
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.

There was I found by one who had Himself
Been hurt by th' archers. In His side He bore,
And in His hands and feet, the cruel scars.
With gentle force soliciting the darts
He drew them forth, and heal'd and bade me live."

In the very chapter from which my text is taken Jesus Christ solves the problem that had baffled the learned and the wise of the world ; to humanity looking upwards and uttering the universal cry, " Whence shall we buy bread that " we may eat ?" He proclaims Himself to be the satisfier of every longing, " I am the bread of " life ; he that cometh to Me shall never " hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall " never thirst."

From the feeding of the five thousand with the meat that perisheth, He leads up, in the synagogue at Capernaum, to the feeding of all believing and loving souls, their healing and their sustenance throughout all eternity : the physical miracle is a figure and a type showing forth a spiritual miracle mightier in its power and grander in its purpose : the five thousand sitting upon the green grass and eating the multiplied bread from Apostolic hands, proclaim to us the whole ransomed world, sitting

at the feet of Jesus, members of His Bride the Church ; His own sheep living in the green pastures which He has prepared for them, and receiving from hands that are ordained to be the medium of His blessings, the healing and sustaining gifts of His most holy Sacraments. When with loving and grateful hearts, having confessed our sins and heard the tender words of absolution, and having received within us the spiritual food of the Body and Blood of Christ which has power to feed and purify the whole man both soul and body ; when thus, with our souls lifted up towards Heaven, we utter those pleasing words of His own matchless prayer, " Give us " this day our daily bread ;" our thoughts surely must cease to dwell upon that perishing meat for the body : they must be entirely rapt and enraptured in the devout contemplation of the Saviour Himself, the bread which came down from Heaven to impart and to sustain the life of the soul.

Doubtless before the prophetic gaze of Jesus, as He preached in Capernaum's synagogue concerning the spiritual eating of His flesh, and the spiritual drinking of His blood, doubtless before His prophetic gaze, were the doubts and cavils

of succeeding ages, the cold material creed of modern days, which would rob the sacraments of their virtue, and banish all miracles to the region of superstition. Surely most of us here to-day have faith enough to take Him at His word. As we contemplate the miraculous feeding of the five thousand in all its spiritual significance, let us take up the words of those who beheld and participated in its material blessings—"This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world."

Not only our Prophet and Teacher, but our Priest and our King. Our Prophet and our Teacher in that He has foretold the glory of His coming kingdom, and taught us how to win it : our Priest, in that He is ever presenting His own sacrifice, and has entered into the Holy of Holies with His own blood ; our King, to whom we owe our loving allegiance, who has power to reward us with the crown of life. As we thus look upon Him as the Soul's Divine Food let our prayer be that of the pleading Jews of old, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

SERMON XIV.

(LENT.)

ST. PETER'S PENITENCE.

ST. LUKE XXII. VV. 61 and 62.

“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”

WHAT a strange picture, hard to be understood, is that of one human soul, buffeted and tormented by Satan, sorely and sadly cast down by reason of its foes. It is like some city surrounded and hemmed in by opposing armies: the enemy knows all its weakest points whereby an entrance and a footing may be won, and will rest neither by night nor by day until it has forced its way straight into the very centre, there to corrupt, to kill, and to destroy. No man that has ever lived and has sought in earnest after heavenly things, but must know something of this hidden struggle, which Heaven permits only that the fight well fought may win the victor's crown.

A quiet, easygoing, happy, peaceful life, is no sign that God is on our side. We have read

heard of that calm confidence by which the
s of some seem once and for ever to be
ired of a place hereafter, come what will, in
presence of their Lord. I have read and
rd of those who, from the first turning of the
rt and eye to the Cross, have spoken as if
r souls were ships under the captainship of
ist, sailing pleasantly and swiftly on through
, straight into Heaven's peaceful harbour—
roaring winds, no threatening clouds, no
ing waves, no running on the rocks in the
rs of slumber. God grant it may be
with them and that they have not some day
denly to confess that their cry of peace was
ie, their calm but the forerunner of a death-
aging storm. I know not, indeed, if it hath
n the will of God thus to grant a victory unto
re without the shedding of a drop of blood:
take some chosen ones into the joys of
aven's peace without the bitterness and sor-
r of earth's unhappy warfare ; but this I know
hat the lot of most men who are born into the
rld is a life of heavy battles and countless
ls, and that the ship is tossed about upon
ling waves, by fearful storms in blackest
rkness, to be saved at last by the Pilot's skill,

having often been well nigh shipwrecked and left a ruin on the waters, a warning to those who should come after. If I seem wrong in this, I would rather seem wrong with St. Peter and St. Paul and all the grand army of Apostles and Martyrs, than right with those who, in these days, make the salvation of a soul an easy matter depending on a single look, the feeling of a believing heart : instead of being the result first of the blood of Christ, and then of one continual and stubborn fight to end only when the soul is given back again to the God who gave it.

If men think otherwise let them look upon the bitter weeping of the chief among the chosen twelve. He was one who had been called to his holy office by the loving voice of the Master Himself. He had been by His side through the years of His public ministry, and, with two others, had seen the greatest proofs of His power, and the strongest witness to His Godhead : and yet we find him weeping. His tears fell not over some sheep that had strayed from the fold of the Shepherd, far away into the wilderness of the world ; he mourned not as an Apostle at the scanty fruits of his ceaseless toil, when, a priest of the Church of his Lord, he

was striving to bring labourers into the vineyard ; he was not weeping over the agonies of his Master in the garden, nor the cruel bondage of the Prince of Peace ; but he was weeping over his own sad fall, his own mean lie, his own coward fear, his own ungrateful heart : at his boasted courage turned suddenly and sadly into craven cowardice—his bold avowal of love and friendship, ending in a threefold denial of the Lord that was about to die for his sake. We may say that he had not yet a full knowledge of Him whom he denied ; that before the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost His mission and origin were covered with a cloud. Even so—Had Christ been but a man, with no other purpose in life or in death than that which is the fruit of merely human love ; still had St. Peter been false to his friend and forsaken his sworn comrade in the hour of his greatest need—the most solemn bonds of human friendship had been violated by a lie, and the heart in which, of all others one looked for truth, degraded and undone by hollowness and falsehood. There had been many among the noble Heathen long before the coming of Him who was to teach the Christian motive for every manly and honourable action,

there had been many in the days when men bent the knee to false and worthless gods, who would have scorned to forsake a friend in that trying hour, when his foes, both blind and mad, were leading him to death, and striving to heap dishonour on his spotless name. His sin was unmistakeably black. Not once only, in the heat of the moment, led on by an irresistible impulse, taken suddenly and quickly in a snare that Satan, desiring to have him and sift him as wheat, had laid for his darkened soul ; but three times, and the third time with an oath he denied all knowledge of that holy and self-denying friend, who, to prove his mission as God had raised the dead, and to show forth his love and sympathy as man had himself wept over the grave of Lazarus, and the departing glory of that falling city, enshrouded in a blacker death than that which causes the body to crumble into dust. There was indeed work for the angels here over this falling soul : the armies of Satan were gathering in strong force already, perhaps, exulting in their fancied prey. The desire of our foe had well nigh been accomplished, the wheat had well nigh been sifted. But, wonderful mercy, wonderful love ! There

had been already registered before the throne of God, a pure prayer, sweet as incense, marked with the blood of the Lamb slain before the foundations of the world—the warning that had told him of his weakness, had been joined with a promise that God and the angels should come with their strength to the rescue of his soul ; “ I have prayed for thee,” said He whom Peter denied, “ that thy faith fail not.”

My brethren, there is but one reason that can lead us to dwell for any length upon the blackness of an Apostle's sin. The Christian faith teaches us gently to handle a brother's shortcomings, to cast over another's fault the mantle of Christian charity. When we glory in another's faults it is a sure sign that we want the Spirit of the Cross, and have yet to learn the very first lessons in the Creed of Christ. What is it, then, that makes us linger here over the black blot on a martyr's fame, this ugly stain on a friend's good faith ?

You will already have guessed the answer. We see in the false friend, the ungrateful disciple, the lying Apostle, a true and startling picture of our own fallen souls. Not thrice only, but many times a day we deny our Lord.

Every burden cast aside as too heavy to bear—every unkind, cruel word against a brother's name—every beggar turned from our doors without a word of pity and a crust of bread—every scornful and haughty look upon those we fancy are beneath us—every murmur against the lot our God has given us—every impure thought carried into action, every evil temper, every unholy word—what are these but denying before the world that we have been baptized into the army of Christ, a confession that we have forgotten our vows at the font, that the cross upon the brow is slowly fading away, that we are ashamed to own the Master who laid down His life for us ?

But there is something yet that fastens us firmly to that spot where the Apostle denied his Lord. As our weak and sin-weary souls are wandering about the earth for comfort, we grasp at every word, every look that gives hope of pardon to repeated sin ; we cling fondly to the well-founded belief that never upon this side the grave the door of mercy can be closed against the penitent heart. As the third time the denial of his Lord passed the dishonoured lips of the degraded Apostle and the faithless

friend, and a wicked oath sealed and signed the treachery of his heart, "The Lord turned and "looked upon Peter."

Who can tell the anguish of his soul as his eye met that tender look. He had seen his Master's hand banish sorrow from the widow's heart, and cheer the mourner by the new-made grave. He had seen him heal the leper, give sight to the blind, and bless little children in His holy arms ; but now home to his own heart came in threefold force and beauty the mercy he had learned once to bless, but for a time had forgotten in his coward fear. Dishonoured, fallen, forsworn, his Lord still turned to give that kind yet reproachful look, that summoned before him one great flood of memory charged with all the holiness, self-sacrifice, purity and pain of his Saviour's life, who was now being led to an agonizing death in loneliness and desolation—"Peter went out and wept bitterly."

We pass then from the blackness of the Apostle's sin to the mercy that forgave it, and the love that forgot it. This is why our thoughts love to linger in that hall where Peter sat down among the accusers of his Lord. We need all the comfort we can read of, all the hope that

angels can bring to us. Now as our hearts are straying away from the Cross and fastening on earthly objects and earthly pleasures, which are swiftly fading away, our Lord is looking from heaven His dwelling place, reproaching our waywardness and folly, and longing to lead us home back again to honour and to truth. If we have thought of St. Peter's sin, let us think too of his godly sorrow, that came swiftly upon him as his conscience owned the guilty denial. We are not without help, our battle is not to be fought alone; Christ prayed for St. Peter, and we have an intercessor with the Father who is ever praying that our faith fail not. And if our faith cannot be moved then are we in the right road. For the faith that God loves brings forth the noble fruit of the Christian manhood and leads us surely heavenward to that glorious home where is prepared the crown of life for the Apostle who denied his Master, and afterwards bitterly repented, together with all those who, passing through this troublesome world, often stumble and fall into sin, and as often shed the true honest tears of bitter repentance, laying hold upon the Lamb of God, whose purity can overbalance the sin of the whole world.

SERMON XV.

(PALM SUNDAY.)

THE LOWLY KING.

ZACHARIAH IX. 9.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation: *lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.*”

THUS sung the inspired prophet to cheer and encourage the Jewish exiles, returned from Babylon, as their souls were cast down, and their energies were flagging. More than five centuries before the birth of the King, the words were uttered which predicted the brief triumph of Palm Sunday, the meek and lowly ride to the city of His love. Strange contrast this to the career of earthly sovereigns, as they pass on to conquest and to victory! In the track of Eastern conquest, would be burning towns and villages, ruined homes and slaughtered thousands; there

would be heard the cry of widows and of orphans, the deep-seated moan of outraged liberty and honour. But, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of "Zion," thy King cometh not as earthly kings; His conquest is over all that can destroy or mar the beauty of Jehovah's creation; in the track of His march are no bleeding hearts, no desolate homes, but where He treads the wilderness is made to blossom as the rose. All those who have resigned themselves into His hands, and laid down their weapons at His feet, bare witness to the joy of willing submission unto Zion's King. "His yoke is easy, and His burden is light."

To-day there cannot be a more fitting subject for our contemplation than the lowliness of Zion's King; the lowliness, not only of His procession to the city, but of His lovely, spotless life; He Himself holds it forth as one reason why we should hear His words and follow His example; "Learn of me," says the way, the truth, and the life, "for I am meek and lowly of heart."

Oh! who would not be willing to sit at His feet, and be a disciple of that gentle Healer of all the spirit's wounds, and bruises, and sores, which stay our progress towards the eternal city? He is the Good Samaritan, who stoops to pour in

the welcome oil and wine, as others pass on in ignorance and indifference ; with a wave of His holy hand He lays aside the old creeds and philosophies, which strove in vain to find a medicine for the human malady ; exalted human intellect must be brought low, and taught its proper submission to the divine mind ; so-called human virtues must be taught to blush before the searching scrutiny of the Redeemer's gaze ;
“ I come not before you as the successful warrior,
“ leading to victory over the graves of thousands,
“ and glorying in human blood ; I wear no crown
“ of gold placed upon my brow by human hands
“ the symbol of human power ; I have no princes
“ in my train, bowing in their homage of the lip ;
“ mine is the teaching of humility ; learn of me,
“ for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall
“ find rest to your souls.”

As our thoughts begin to dwell upon so wonderful an attribute as lowliness in the God-made man, we are struck at once by the strange contrast which it presents, to what the world calls noble. Out in the world, in the great battle for life, but few admire the meek and gentle spirit that sinks and buries itself, entirely forgetful of its own claims ; over such a spirit

the world would ride in cruel haste and smile as it sunk upon its knees, wounded and bruised. The world's rewards are for the bold, the self-asserting, leaving unto those who are poor in spirit the blessings of another kingdom. Had Jesus Christ come with pomp and riches, asserting loudly his own right to the sovereignty of the world, and surrounding His courts with all the splendour of earthly monarchs ; then would crowds have flocked to His standard, and sworn fidelity to His cause ; the cry of scorn and cruel mockery would have been changed for the shout of praise and empty flattery ; hatred would have yielded to what would have passed for love, and the cross would have vanished before the crown ; but the world could not comprehend the meek and lowly spirit, that willingly carried so many heavy burdens, and bore so many sicknesses.

Wonder may well mingle with our reverence as we think of that glorious exaltation which was His in His Father's kingdom, and then turn to contemplate the meekness that led Him to choose a lowly maiden for His virgin mother—a carpenter for His reputed father ; strange contrast, indeed, between the rude manger of a village inn, and

the choirs of sinless angels, chanting to the shepherds the glories of redeeming love.

Do we, my brethren, look upon this humiliation and condescension in the right spirit? Are we conscious of the mighty love which it shadows forth, of the inimitable self-sacrifice which it teaches? I know that the world, for hundreds of years, has stood breathless at the beauty of the sentiment; our choicest works of art have been enlisted to enhance its attractiveness. Poets, painters and musicians have made it the theme of their grandest works, and thus forced the admiration of multitudes; to represent the holy Child and His Virgin Mother, in painting, or poetry, or sculpture, or music, has been the work of a life-time, and the consecrated task of many a genius.

But as each Christmastide comes round, and we celebrate that lowly birth by prayer and praise, and the interchange of those social kindnesses which He so nobly taught; how many try to realize it as the first step, in that wondrous humiliation which ended in a malefactor's death? The contemplation of that childhood should kindle within us a devoted imitation of its purity and gentleness; that Babe

that lay in the manger was as truly the Incarnate God, as the man of sorrows who bore His cross to Calvary ; that mute example speaks to us in the same spirit as the maturer words of His manhood, " Learn of Me, for I am meek and "lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your "souls."

Behold Him, as He ascended from the waters of Jordan, the accredited and consecrated ambassador of His Father, how He won to Himself individual souls by the power of His gentleness and meekness ! In His public teaching, indeed, He must needs have been dogmatic ; to His keeping were entrusted those eternal truths which are immutable and everlasting as Divinity itself ; in revealing His Father's holy will, He could not speak with doubtful words, nor leave His precepts open questions, they must be pronounced in clear authoritative tones, which could admit of no doubt or uncertainty.

So too, His Church now, following His example, has no alternative, but to be dogmatic concerning the immutable doctrines He has entrusted to her custody ; there are in the world many questions of speculation concerning which different men may hold different opinions ; but how can

there be any alternative where Christ has spoken with authority, leaving to His own blood-bought Church the commission to teach and to preach? No, by the love which He bore, and taught us to bear, to all struggling human souls; by that eternal charity which holds the palm among Christian graces, we are bound to preach dogmatically but one way of salvation, but one hope of heaven, but one name by which men can be saved, Jesus the Redeemer.

But see how He won individual souls by the power of His meekness and gentleness! Look at that sinful woman brought to His presence by the eager, accusing crowd who seemed to be thirsting for her condemnation. As they stole away, one by one, self-convicted by His searching challenge, He won that wandering sheep by tenderness and forgiveness. "Hath no man condemned thee? Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." Or picture to yourselves that strange and beautiful scene in the house of Simon the Pharisee, when the poor Magdalene crept to His feet in silence and in tears: what more glorious and welcome assurance could He have given her as she wept in humiliation before Him; it was the assurance for which we are all

toiling, and hoping, and praying; it was that for which His Church is struggling, it is the burden of her prayers and the condition of her triumph, the assurance that her sins are forgiven.

And surely, too, we may indulge our reverent imagination concerning the kindness of His tone, and the tenderness of His look. As individual souls came to Him in the extremity of their need we hear of no hard repelling words closing up again their opening hearts. What was it that touched St. Peter to the quick as the false apostle proved a traitor to his friend and teacher? No stern rebuke, no thunderbolt of vengeance in punishment for his black ingratitude. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter,"—a look which had a silent power to touch his heart, and fill it with tearful penitence. To His true children this meekness of the blessed Jesus is a stronger incentive to a holy life, than all the threatenings of justice and judgment; it is nobler far thus to be won by gentleness and love, than to be snatched by fear from the impending doom from which He lived and died to save us.

What a glorious example, too, of meekness and humility do we behold in every step of His

passion. He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, unresisting, silent, enduring! In that mysterious conflict in the garden, the bitterness of which no human imagination can picture, we seem almost startled by the meek submission of that holy prayer, "nevertheless not as I wilt, but as thou wilt."

And even now, as He sits in glory at the Father's right hand; now, as we expect in our shortsightedness that the day of His meekness is over, swallowed up in His wondrous exaltation; now we read in the book of the Revelation that He is still called the Lamb; the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed His chosen ones, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, join in the universal harmony of praise, saying, "Blessing and honour, and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever." May each of us take up the words of the prayer, uttered in the fulness of a loving heart: "Lord Jesus, I worship Thee triumphant in glory, and bowing down before Thine ineffable meekness, I implore Thee that Thou wouldst deign to

“triumph in my weak heart. Fill me with Thy
“lamb-like gentleness in every word, and deed,
“and thought. Reign over my heart and life as
“Thou reignest in heaven. Teach me to suffer
“with Thee in this life, and grant me to triumph
“with Thee in the life to come.”

SERMON XVI.

(GOOD FRIDAY.)

THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

ST. JOHN XIX. part of v. 30.

“It is finished.”

ONE by one, our Holy Church leads her children through the feasts and the fasts, the seasons of the Christian's joy and sorrow : and those who refuse to bow the head in tears, have not the right to lift it up in rejoicing ; those who would rise with the Lord Jesus Christ must go with Him to the grave and be buried. Faith calls us to-day to run back along the course of time, nearly two thousand years, and try to picture to the heart, and the mind, and the soul, a holy mountain in a holy land, on the mountain the Cross, on the Cross the Son of God. The same story is told unto us that was told unto our fathers : there is no new doctrine to preach : every man that has already died, or that has yet

to die, can have only one claim to a place in God's presence when the Judge shall come to judge: that is faith in the work we call to mind to-day, a faith which has brought forth, through the help of the Holy Spirit, the fruits of a holy life.

A belief in the Cross, if it have no power to make our hearts burn within us and our lives shine without us, can have no power either to bring us to Heaven when our life upon earth is like a vapour, has passed away. The Apostle St. James speaks plainly upon this point the teaching of reason and truth. We have heard of the glories of redemption; so have the evil spirits who wander through the air, seeking to draw men away from the road which leads to everlasting peace! We know that Christ has triumphed over death, and hell, and the grave; so do the enemies of our souls would lead us, blindfolded, into the second death. We believe there is a land of perfect rest, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest;" we believe in the article of the Christian faith, every recorded in the life of Christ; but others, so far, can have their lot with us, "the devils also believe and tremble. But this belief with them has no power

lead them back to the place from which they fell ; every act in the life of the Lamb of God they know ; was not their chief with Him in the wilderness, striving to lead His human nature, His perfect manhood into sin ? Did not he try every temptation to shake His trust in the upholding arm of God, and to draw His soul down to the earth ? “The devils believe.” But theirs is no comforting faith, bringing with it hope, which is the anchor of the Christian’s soul. The more they know of the power of God and the sacrifice of the Cross, the ministry of angels and comfort of the Holy Ghost, the more certain and fixed must seem to them their everlasting despair. They believe and they know ; but their belief and their knowledge are a portion of their pain : “The devils believe and tremble.”

And an Apostle argues thus to call us back from ruin, to win us from a faith that bears no fruit, the sign of life ; the belief of the heartless, whose souls are not stirred by the agony that followed our Redeemer as He bore all our burdens with Him to the mount of His crucifixion ; who feel no warm affection for Him whose love is boundless as the ocean, a great and

glorious mystery ; the belief of the worshippers of gold and the ardent lovers of their own ways, is, after all, like that which causes the devils to tremble who are awaiting the wrath of God.

This day, of all others in the Christian year, seems to speak to us of mercy and love. It speaks of the burdens of all willing, contrite hearts, laid down for another to bear away ; of a fountain wherein all men may wash and be clean ; of wounds and bruises healed, and the worn and the weary restored to their strength.

The voice which came from the Redeemer as He entrusted His Spirit into the keeping of His God, a voice to be heard over the length and breadth of the earth, seemed like an answer to the promise given in the early days of the first Adam, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." "It is finished." The loving plan of humiliation formed long ago, when Adam first sinned, by the glorious Trinity in Unity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, was finished as the Soul of the Son passed away from His holy body on the first Good Friday, centuries ago. His work of humiliation was completed ; He had begun His life upon earth as a little child, meek and lowly, and had toiled on in

suffering and pain : His had been no easy life like that of His so called followers now : He had thought of others first, of Himself last, and the triumph of winning human souls from the misery of the world and the powers of the devil, had strengthened His soul to the end ; through the unbelief of his brethren, through the hard words and bitter sneers of His own nation, through the scourging and the spitting, the cloud that hid His Father's face, the nails and the thorns and the shame of the Cross.

Our life, if we would look upon it aright, is a road leading to Heaven. By the wayside stands the Cross, pointing upward and onward. Thousands are hastening to the grave, looking down, losing their way : they shut their ears to the voices that would call them to peace. Often and often do we feel the heavy burden upon our backs, the burden of fallen and sinful humanity—sorrow and death. There is a hand that would gently lighten the weight upon our souls and help us to bear our burdens—that would wipe the tears from our eyes and banish the pains from our hearts. But we have our part to do and how many of us are doing nothing? We cannot sit down and be borne easily to Heaven without a struggle ; we

cannot have a crown without a cross ; if the sufferings of Jesus Christ are to save us, we must feel them in our hearts, and they must make us weep over our sins. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow?"

If this be such a grand day in the history of the world, a day on which the chains were unbound from all willing human souls, and liberty offered as a free gift, the glorious liberty of the children of God, why are we called upon to fast and to weep and deeply to humble our souls? Is not every drop of that precious blood a promise of pardon, every thorn in that holy brow the hope of a crown? Prophets and kings had sung of this hour of the Cross, every sacrifice in the Temple had shadowed it forth; this was the grand completion of a work of mercy, the seal to a mission of love! Ought not the words "It is finished," to sound through the earth as a summons to joy, to pass from house to house, and from lip to lip, till, hand in hand, the whole world break forth into praise for the blessings of the Cross.

But let us pause a little. Jesus Christ, to-day, is hanging upon the accursed tree, His soul is

very sorrowful, His flesh is bleeding, His heart is breaking. He is our Saviour and our Brother, we must join with Him in His agony. He has upon Him the burden of all men's sins ; let us offer to Him willingly the sincere sorrow of contrite hearts. As in faith we look upon the Cross and Him who is nailed to it, we may believe, for it is true, that our voices joined with the mad throng that led Him to death, crying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." We may, like Pilate, take water and wash our hands, saying we will have nothing to do with this just man : but water cannot destroy the stain, nor cleanse the guilty soul. Our sins that we commit day by day have their place among those which brought Him, who was clothed with light as with a garment, to the utmost darkness of sorrow, a darkness wherein was hidden the brightness of His Father's face. This is why we are called to mourn and to fast. Christ is in bitter agony upon the tree of shame, and we, with all others, that once have lived, or that are to live, have done our part to place Him there. Stay a little, we will presently rejoice. A holy man will bear Him to a new tomb, and holy women will bear the spices for his body, and the third day He

shall burst away from the chains of Death, and in the place where He lay shall be angels clothed in shining garments. Then shall come the Church's call to joy ; the song of victory over an empty grave ; the shout of triumph over Death !

This is the day above all days, when all injuries are to be forgiven, all hard hearts softened, all cruel words unspoken, all cruel deeds, as far as we can, undone. We perhaps may know of some who were once among the number of our friends, to whom now, for some unkindness in word or deed, we refuse to give the hand, holding back in unchristian pride. I know it is hard to bend, it is hard to forgive ; Christ knew this well when He taught us to pray, putting in one special petition to the throne of His Father, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Without this there is no chance of pardon, no hope of peace. It is one of the surest and quickest signs of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. There is nothing but the contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus to make us forgive, nothing else that can so fully wipe out a long list of wrongs, nothing so powerful to cast our pride down to the ground, and make us feel in our inmost hearts, that other men's offences

against us are nothing at all, compared to the sins which we daily commit against the purity and holiness of God, the dishonour which we daily bring upon the Christian's banner which is the Cross of Christ. The words that ought to come before us when ill-will rises in the heart as it sometimes does, strive as we may to keep it out, are the words of that prayer that was heard from the Cross, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

To-day we are called earnestly to look upon the suffering form of Him who was crucified. If our struggles are increasing, if the tempter is coming with more and more power, with sweeter temptations, with lovelier pleasures, it is only the earnest look upon the Cross, and the earnest prayer unto Christ that can bring down to our aid the ministering angels of Heaven. Perhaps to some of us some hard trial is coming on, or is now upon us, and difficulty and darkness seem hemming us in on every side. There is the Cross of Christ and only under its shadow is there hope of safety. And besides all the troubles and sins and temptations of life, there are for every man the terrors of death. Swiftly is the hour coming on, and no human hand can

stay it. Perhaps to-day, perhaps to-morrow, perhaps years to come ! Are we to tremble when the flesh begins to feel the cold touch that summons the body to return to dust ? No, by the truth of Heaven's promise, the Cross has power *then* to cast light in the darkness, and give strength in the hour of weakness. The work of this holy day is the power that is felt all through life and in the hour of death, and shall win for us, nay has already won it, an entrance into the joy of the redeemed.

As Christ's pure soul was passing away, entrusted lovingly into His father's keeping, He uttered those memorable words—" *It is finished.*" When the last wrench comes for our souls and we bid the last long farewell to earth and all our earthly treasures ; when before the keen vision of the dying, a resistless flood of memory summons before us the story of our lives ; though the lips have scarce the power to pronounce the words, the soul shall feel that "*it is finished.*" Oh ! say what shall be finished then for us ? Shall it be the butterfly existence of sinful pleasure, deed after deed of selfish sin, without contrite repentance and supplicating prayer ; or shall the soul in humble confidence in the dying Saviour,

washed and cleansed for ever in His blood, have the grace and power thankfully to cry, "Father
"I have finished the work which *Thou* gavest me
"to do."

"Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes ;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies ;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadow's flee ;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."

SERMON XVII.

EASTER DAY.

THE RESURRECTION.

1 COR. XV. v. 21.

“For since by man came death, by man came also the Resurrection of the dead.”

THE night is succeeded by day—the thick gloom of darkness is dispelled by the brightness of the morning sun. The summer passes into winter—the earth is covered with snow, or crusted with the frost, and the sap of the trees runs down into the roots and lies buried beneath the ground—the earth is as it were one vast grave, and all things seem to die. But the Spring comes joyfully with smiles to gladden the heart of man—the plants and flowers peep out of their graves and rise again—they cast their sweet fragrance over the face of Nature, and fill the air with their balmy breath—the sap of the trees spreads once more among the branches ; and green leaves

and opening buds smile upon the land. This is the Resurrection of Nature. 'Tis the voice of God gently speaking to us every day we live, and pointing, in silent eloquence, in the loveliest language, in the gentlest love, to the Resurrection of the last day.

The season of Lent, which our Church has marked out for us as a special time of humiliation, fasting and prayer,—as a time of the very strictest examination of our words, and thoughts, and deeds, has passed away, and the bright joyous time of Easter has once more dawned upon us in the mercy and long-suffering of God. We have meditated on the sufferings of the Lamb of God: we have followed Him in His day of humiliation and scorn, and heard the unholy words of those cruel mockers who gloried in His shame. We have read of the wound, and the blood, and the water, and the passing of His sinless human soul into the presence of His God. Loving hands laid his precious body in the grave,—they wound it in linen and with spices, and bore it gently to the sepulchre in the garden—a tomb in which no child of man had ever yet lain down in his last-sleep.

Those women who had followed Him in tears,

and whom He bid not to weep for Him, but for themselves and their children, lingered to the last ; and others with grateful hearts, agonized by the loss of Him who had been to them so merciful, so loving, so gentle, were unwilling to leave the place where, as they thought, He lay vanquished, and in chains under the hand of death. A stone was rolled against the door, a watch was set, and men and women returned to their own homes.

Does it not seem to you very wonderful that those chosen disciples of Jesus could have proved so blind, so miserably short-sighted, so deaf to the voice of their Master. He had told them often that He would rise again. He had told them often that He was the Christ, the Son of God. He had told them that He was the Resurrection and the Life—equal and one with God. Oh ! how could they believe that death could hold Him captive ! How could they believe that any grave on earth could hide the Lord of Heaven, or that corruption and the worm could feed for one moment upon the pure precious body of the Lord Jesus Christ !

Like sheep without a shepherd they were scattered abroad in the very midst of wolves :

fear had killed their hope : they had broken their promises and forsaken their Lord, and in those three days as they wandered without a guide, they must have all bitterly felt the loss of Him whom one had betrayed, and all had left to die alone.

But the third day, behold there was a great earthquake ; a mighty deafening noise as of thunder ; the ground rose and heaved unsteadily beneath the feet of man like corn fields that rock in the tempest.

“The Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and His raiment white as snow : and for fear of Him the keepers did shake and became as dead men.”

Well might the hearts of men rejoice upon that first Easter-day. The Lord of Glory had burst from the bonds of death, and triumphed gloriously over the darkness of the grave. “O sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvellous things : with His own right hand and with His holy arm, hath He gotten Himself the victory.” For us Jesus lay down quietly in the grave. But the third day, and for

us, He rose a conqueror with a crown of glory, that Christians might sing unto the end of time, "Oh Death, where is thy sting? Oh Grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

When once we have laid hold upon the cross of Christ; when once we have cast there before the Lamb, the heavy burden of our sin, our sorrow and our shame, what a blessed hope is the Christian's hope of the Resurrection to eternal life! Man, as man, cannot but shudder at the thought of the dark grave, and the damp earth, corruption, and the worm. But man, as a Christian, may comfort his fainting heart with the bright vision of that glorious day when the dead shall rise. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Though worms destroy the body; though every bone be mingled with the dust, and thousands of years roll on to be swallowed up in the great ocean of eternity; though we be buried in the depth of the sea, and the waves roll over our head; though part of us be here and part there; though our dust be scattered by the winds of Heaven to the uttermost parts of the earth; though we be devoured by wild beasts,

and become part of the substance of the lion and the bear ; though we be burned with fire, and our ashes be cast into the river ; yet, at the sound of the trump—when the voice of God shall summon all men to appear before the judgment seat—life shall be breathed upon the lifeless dust—bone shall fit to bone and joint to joint—back again to their old places shall come the members of the body—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the countless hosts of the dead shall burst from the bondage of death and the grave, and stand the same men, body and soul, to answer for their deeds. “ Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones. I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live ; and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath into you, and ye shall live : and I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.”

The bodies of some we love, and still remember in tears, are now lying beneath the turf. We all of us miss some warm hand, some loving heart, some welcome voice. What a comfort is the bright hope of the Resurrection. Not long

hence, we shall meet again, where there never can be any more death or parting, for death is swallowed up in victory, and heaven is our everlasting home. Then raise your voice of thanksgiving unto God. This is a day of days for Christians ; pour out your hearts and lift up your souls, for we celebrate to-day our great Redeemer's victory over the grave—His bursting of the bands of death—the triumph of the Sun of Righteousness over the darkness and gloom of sin, “ For since by man came death, by man came “ also the Resurrection of the dead.”

Let us live as men who have constantly before us another life ; as men who have some day to give an account of our thoughts, words, and works. It is an awful thought that there is a Resurrection for the wicked as well as for those who are accounted good through the blood of Christ. No men whose bodies are not the temples of the Holy Ghost can be raised unto glory. Now, while there is time, and who can tell how short that time is—now, let us grasp the hand of Christ that is stretched out to save us, and purify ourselves, by the aid of His holy Spirit, from evil deeds.

Believing in ten thousand Resurrections as mere

proofs of the mighty power of God : believing in the Resurrection of Christ, “the first fruits of them that slept,” without letting that belief have some holy effect upon our lives, is as useless as the faith, which though able “to remove mountains and cast them into the sea,” lacks the blessed gift of charity and dwindles into nothing. “I have hope,” says St. Paul, “I have hope towards God that there shall be a Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man.” Such a hope as this, believed in by the heart and acted on throughout the days of our life will encourage all drooping spirits, sustain all fainting hearts, sweeten all our miseries and lighten all our burdens—give strength in every danger and support us in every trial.

Every Sunday as we worship in God’s house we distinctly declare our belief in the Resurrection of the body. This is the meaning of it. It is appointed unto men once to die, for all men to rise again ; our souls as they pass from the body pass into the hand of God and live. One day, known only unto God, our bodies, though they be dissolved into dust or scattered into

ashes, shall be joined again and re-united to our souls—no man that was ever born shall be forgotten, no flesh left in the grave, every man shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ and answer for himself.

If we have made Christ our friend upon earth, if we have believed faithfully and laboured unceasingly, if we have ever looked unto the Cross for help, and to His precious blood for the cleansing of our souls, then will He be unto us the Resurrection unto glory and the life everlasting, our exceeding great reward, our endless joy, and give unto us that ceaseless rest which remaineth unto the people of God. Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

(ASCENSION DAY.)

OUR TREASURES IN HEAVEN.

ST. MAT. VI. VV. 19-21.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

WE never find that our Lord Jesus Christ, in His teaching, lost sight of nature and the feelings she has planted in the human breast. If He spoke to men with the authority of God, His words were uttered upon earth, and always found within the heart an echo of their truth. Thus, in the words of my text, He is acknowledging the necessity of something to be loved and prized by all men: He does not tell us to do violence to the feelings within us, and, with coldness and indifference pursue the path of duty with no

warmth and with no enthusiasm. There is and must be something for each heart to value, and this it is that His Divine lips call "a treasure." A treasure is something which is to us immeasurably dear: we would suffer much, dare much, deny ourselves much, and pray much to keep it without spot or injury: it is something that we think of as night is closing thickly over us, and when the morning sun calls us to our daily task: through the long hours of the day, as we toil for our bread our thoughts often and often hover about the spot where it lies: it may be dead or it may be alive: it may be some object and purpose in life upon which we have bestowed much thought and care, or it may be a living form that is close at hand or far away; be this as it may, to sum it all up, our treasure is something which, obeying the feelings of nature, we fondly love.

Listen, then, to the voice of the Divine Teacher: "I know the feelings that are native to every human breast, which is sometimes calm like still and silent waters; sometimes turbulent and stormy like waves lashed into fury by the violence of the winds: I know the necessity there is within you for strong attachment, for

“a craving for and a clinging to something and
“somebody. Every heart must have its trea-
“sures—something to love, something to prize,
“something in which must be centred the
“abundant beauty of the heart’s affection. I
“would save you from bitter disappointment,
“from the agony of blighted hopes, from the
“curse of ungrateful hearts : when the last hour
“comes over you with the shadows that cast
“gloom upon the flesh, I would not have you
“lie down to die in bitterness of spirit, feeling
“the life that is ending to have been but a
“dreary waste, a seed time without any promise
“of a glorious harvest which the angels might
“reap with joy : when you pass from the scenes
“of earth and the pleasures of the world, I
“would not, for the love I bear your soul, which
“I died to save, I would not that you should
“leave your treasures behind you.”

Look at the moth that is silently corrupting the garment day by day and hour by hour ; little by little it causes it to crumble and decay, to lose all its beauty, to fall into dust ; look at the rust which lays slowly and quietly a firm hold upon strong iron, spreading every day upon the surface, every day eating deeper and deeper

into the hardest substance, making it weak and brittle, easy to be broken as the thinnest wood. Thus shall sin and the world and the devil bring to nought the sweetest treasures that rest only upon earth, that spring alone from the world's fleeting joy : like thieves who in the silence of the night steal our silver and gold, shall Satan in a moment render empty and useless the toilsome labour of years, and cause all earthly things to fall from our grasp and vanish from our eyes, leaving us spiritless and joyless, comfortless and without hope. It is the purest and strongest love that speaks unto us the warning to save us from despair. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal : but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal ; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

There is no time more suited than the present for thoughts like these : our Church calls her children with the loving voice of a tender mother, to celebrate with heart and lip the Ascension of the Christian's greatest treasure to the right

hand of our Heavenly Father, there abiding ready and willing to receive at our hands the blessings we love the best, and to lay them by for us in the everlasting treasure house of God. He who teaches us the only place of safety, in which may be kept without fear of corruption or theft, those things that are dear to the human heart, has himself opened the door, and left upon the clouds a bright track of light, reaching from earth into the presence of our Father. This season is especially set apart for worship and thanks for this mighty miracle, this priceless blessing. One would think to see the many empty seats in the temple of God, that the blessings of Christ and the benefits of His Ascension were the birthright and treasure of a scanty few: that the rest were content with the treasures that earth can supply, the corruption of the moth and the rust, the lawless violence of the thief. How many amongst us follow in holy thought, in prayer and in praise, that sacred form once pierced with bloody wounds, now bright and luminous in heavenly glory, as it leaves the earth and passes from the consecrated mount of Olives into heaven's purest joy. Deaf to the call of the Church, blind to the mercy of God, an event

which rent the clouds, and brought down angels from Heaven in the shining garments of holiness, falls upon many of us as the story of some far off wonder, wrought in the days of long ago, so long ago as to be as good as forgotten, forgotten by those who go groping and working and seeking among the things of earth, for objects on which to throw away and degrade the noblest feelings of the heart ; for treasures which, almost as soon as they are won, the moth and the rust will corrupt, and thieves will snatch from them with violence and contempt.

Think not, my brethren, that I would for a moment undervalue the blessings which are showered upon earth for the comfort and happiness of men. It was never intended that we should let them altogether alone, any more than that we should pass by, without a thought of admiration and a whisper of thanks, the lovely flowers that adorn the fields and gardens in the summer time. It was never meant that we should be slothful workers in the labour of life, or content to remain year after year in poverty, without a struggle for honest independence.

Such was never the teaching of Christ : such was never the teaching of His Apostles : such a

view of life were unhealthy and distorted, fit for the hermit who dwells in his lonely cell, but not for Christians who have to labour and to fight in a working world. The mother who feels a strong and irresistible love binding her to the child that is "bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh," and who knows that her love is returned by the helpless creature that clings to her with perfect confidence, is not called upon by the teaching of Christ to look with indifference and coldness upon the little loving form ; she may love it with the full and abundant love that, in spite of herself, goes forth from her inmost heart. But she must first thank God that has given her this blessing, and love Christ who has redeemed it in His precious blood ; she must teach it with the first power of utterance to lisp its simple prayers, and bless the name of Jesus ; she must pray for blessings upon its path, for armour and weapons to fight the battle of life, for guardian angels to keep its feet from stumbling as it travels along the difficult journey. This would be taking an earthly treasure and laying it up in Heaven, in the arms and keeping of Jesus. This would be guarding it from corruption and theft, placing a friend in heaven to welcome her

when the struggle of life was over. And so must it be with every blessing upon earth : with business, with farms, with cattle, with friends, with brothers and sisters, with husbands and wives, with money, with every hope and every object in life, every thought of ambition, every effort to get on. First comes the dedication unto God in Heaven, then the honest labour upon earth, and then is sure to follow the blessing of our Father and the loving help of angels. God only knows how many opportunities we are daily suffering to slip through our fingers, opportunities of laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven. A cup of cold water given in the name of Christ, a portion of money given to charity and to God, a friendly word spoken in the hour of need, a good example and a whisper of confidence in Christ, put forth in a time of difficulty and danger : all these things may be sent up to Heaven on the wings of prayer, so many witnesses of hearty love unto Christ and his work. And as, one by one, things we prize are laid up in safety in the treasure house of God, our hearts quickly follow into an atmosphere of purity and peace : if all that we prize the most we have given into the keeping of Christ, our hearts will

mount up too and become purified and holy, worthy hereafter to meet their treasures again in the presence of angels, and archangels, and the grand and glorious company of the just made perfect, who have followed their treasures and entered into rest. Once more I lay before you the earnest and loving pleading of the Saviour of the world, whose blood has made it possible to live in Heaven, and who has Himself opened a way that never shall be closed till life is over.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,
“where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where
“thieves break through and steal : but lay up
“for yourselves treasures in heaven, where
“neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where
“thieves do not break through nor steal : for
“where your treasure is, there will your heart
“be also.”

SERMON XIX.

(WHIT-SUNDAY.)

THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE.

REVELATION XXII. part of v. 17.

“And the Spirit and the Bride say come.”

I KNOW it is believed by some that these words are the loving answer to the Lord Jesus Christ, who declares, in a former part of this chapter, “Behold, I come quickly;” but they seem to me, taking into consideration the words that immediately follow, to be rather an invitation to all men under heaven to take refuge under the blessings of the cross, to make ready to meet the Bridegroom, when He shall come to wed the Church, His bride.

If it be so, how appropriate are they for our consideration to-day, when we call to mind the mighty out-pouring of the Spirit of Truth who,

in accordance with the promise of Him "who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God," was sent by the Father in the name of the Son, to bless and to quicken the Church, the Bride of Christ.

Revelation begins with the Spirit's work—it ends with His loving, earnest invitation.

As at the beginning, He turned disorder into beauty by moving on the face of the waters, so unto the end, he is ready and willing to convert and to bless, to bring back again to the fold the wandering sheep, to reinstate the prodigal son to his place in his father's house.

We, indeed, ought to have a nobler estimate of our origin and our destiny; for ever before our eyes, in the pages of the Revelation of God are pictured to us the Eternal Trinity working in love to bring us to the paradise we have lost; the Father blessing us, receiving us, with an open generous hand showering his bounties around us; the Son interceding for us in one unbroken prayer, the prayer of the Cross, and the Spirit dwelling in the hearts that are willing to have Him for their guest, quickening into energy, bringing the dead back again to life.

As we look into God's Word, from Genesis to

Revelation, what a record of the Spirit's work is there! Holy men of old were like harps rightly tuned, from which the breath of the Spirit brought forth the music of Heaven. They spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. History, Philosophy, Poetry, Prayer; all that the varied nature of man could ask for teaching or for devotion, given in the fullest bounty of a Father's love.

“The Spirit and the Bride” together “say
“come.”

It is this close union between the Holy Ghost and the Church that has given to her the power to spread, from a little beginning, over kingdoms and principalities that could not thus have been conquered by any human might; it is this that has given to her children and her priests the will and the endurance to become martyrs and confessors, to live in chains, and to die in agony.

And so, ever since that first Whit-Sunday, have the spirit and the Church together, uttered the loving invitation; old empires have fallen, and new ones have risen on their ruins; countless generations of men have passed away, and been forgotten; but through all these convulsions, through bitter hostility, persecution and torture,

the Bride, the Church, by the Spirit's aid has held her own, and has been faithful to the message she was from the first commissioned to utter in the name of her Lord, the message to come unto the Cross of Christ.

“The Spirit and the Bride say come.” Not now does the Spirit speak unto us in miracles, that the eye can see ; we hear no rushing mighty wind, we behold no cloven tongues like as of fire ; men are not now, like S. Paul, suddenly startled on their journey by a light from heaven, and enlisted in the army of Christ, whom before they had disregarded. We, who have been baptized, are already enlisted in that army ; the Spirit begun his loving work with us, when we were infants, when the Bride, the Church, received us in her arms. Since then, as we have wandered away, how many times has not the Spirit whispered an entreaty to come back again ; who can say that he has not often felt a burning longing for a holier life, an almost irresistible craving to bury the ugly past, and trample it under his feet ; to rise on the ruins of his dead self, a better and a holier man, with prayer more frequently on his lips, and work for God more fully the object of his life ?

We are taught to attribute to the working and influence of the Spirit, not only the great and mighty renovations in the history of the Christian world, like that which we specially celebrate to-day, the founding and inspiration of the Christian Church ; but, also the special guidance and prompting to holy deeds of every single individual member of that Church, as he struggles on through trial and temptation to victory ; and not only the holy energy which prompts us to work for God, but the comfort and the consolation that come to us from Heaven in the hour of our sorrow.

Our Redeemer, as He declared His obligation to depart, and leave His disciples without the blessing and encouragement of His bodily presence, promised the gift of a Comforter, who should abide with us for ever.

He it is, who is the "gracious willing Guest," ready to take up His everlasting abode in the heart, that, humbled in prayer and contrite in penitence, is willing to receive Him. His is the voice that, gentle and sympathizing, soft "as the breath of even," checks each rebellious and impure thought which Satan longs and works to see ripen into wicked deeds. As

fears rise within the breast, and doubts rush upon the soul, causing us to feel uncertainty as to what we are working for, and the means by which we ought to labour, His is the voice that lovingly stills the tumult, and speaks to us of Heaven. We cannot boast of any natural purity, of one innate thought without guilt; He is the spring of every virtue, and the source of every victory in the contest that cannot end upon earth, that ends only when the life departs from the body, and the body sinks into the grave, to await the quickening influence of the same Spirit, to re-animate the dry bones, and to clothe what once was mortal, in the splendour and purity of immortality, which shall last for ever.

“The Spirit and the Bride say come”—The Bride, the Lamb’s wife, waiting now for the Bridegroom, Christ Jesus, her Lord, echoes the invitation of the Spirit. The bells, that every Sabbath and Holy Day, ring throughout the land, are an invitation to every one that thirsteth to come to the temple of God; the baptism of every child regenerated really and fully by water and the Spirit, is a summons to each member to remember the cross marked upon the brow, now faded and worn away by the seducing influences

of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; a summons to remember the enlisting in the army, whose banner we have disgraced, whose captain we hourly dishonour. The reading of God's Word is the setting forth the work of the Spirit, a call to "lay up for ourselves treasures " in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth " corrupt, and where thieves do not break through " and steal." Every-time that the bodies of the departed are committed to the grave in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to Eternal Life, the voice of the Bride proclaims, through the Spirit, the blessedness of the dead that die in the Lord, and warns us to prepare, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, for the hour that certainly must come, when we too shall find the earth slipping beneath our feet and fading from our sight, when we must fall asleep to wake again in the presence of Judgment. The Bride, the Church, in all her ordinances and sacraments, is sounding the invitation to come unto Christ. She bids us give thanks for everything that falls to our lot, given to us freely through the intercession and for the sake of Christ. Every mother is taught to kneel before God's altar and offer up her praises, in the spirit of

thankfulness, for each little child as it comes to feed the craving of her heart, and bless her with its confiding love; and every creed proclaims, without a shade of doubt, the Church's unvaried and never-dying belief in the Spirit that has ever sustained her in the hour of trial, as she teaches each member, whenever we are assembled together for prayer and for praise, to pronounce distinctly the ground of his hope of victory in the contest with sin, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." And more strongly than ever is the invitation given in the most Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of her Lord. The bread broken, and the wine poured out, are a showing forth of the broken and bruised Body, and the holy Blood flowing from the pierced side; and at the head of the words the Bride proclaims to be comfortable, are those which contain the loving entreaty of the Bridegroom Himself, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

But, a time will come, when the invitation shall sound no more. The call of the Spirit shall cease, the voice of the Church, now heard in loving and faithful intreaty, shall for ever be hushed. The Bridegroom shall wed the Bride,

and they who are ready, who have the Spirit in the heart, and the fruits of the Spirit in the life, shall go into the feast, and the door will be shut. May it be ours to listen now to the invitation of the Spirit and the Bride, that hereafter we may hear the Bridegroom's welcome voice, "Come ye
"blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom
"prepared for you from the foundation of the
"world."

SERMON XX.

(MISSIONS.)

BROTHERLY LOVE.

1 JOHN IV. part of v. 20.

“For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen.”

BROTHERLY love to our fellow-men is one essential part of the religion of Christ. The hymn that was sung by the heavenly host to celebrate the birth of Him who has left us the example to follow, speaks not only of Glory to God ; but also of goodwill from man to man. The angel's opening words to the shepherd watchers on the slopes of Bethlehem were “Fear not,” and “Perfect love” says the Apostle of love, “Perfect love casteth out fear.” Henceforth the hard heart was to be softened ; all precepts of the Jewish law which did violence to the teaching of mercy and forgiveness were for ever to be cast aside—“An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” were words not to be heard on the Christian's lip, nor written in his code of morals.

Those who before were content to do no harm, were now to be stirred up and rendered enthusiastic in doing good. Our neighbour henceforth is not one concerning whom we may stand upon neutral ground ; our duties towards him are not henceforth to be solely passive, forbidding us only to bear against him false witness, or covet anything that is his.

The characters that are held up to us by Christ as full of beauty, whom we are called upon to reverence and to imitate, are not those who retire into some cell to escape the world, forgetting that they have brethren who need something more than their prayers. How gently, how kindly does the Good Samaritan bend over the fallen Jew, and bind up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine ! We acknowledge him to be noble and true to his manhood ; while the priest and the Levite, who pass by on the other side to their lip service in the Temple of God whom they could not see, and whom they could not love, are held up to our scorn as men whose want of charity we dare not praise. How hideous is the rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, eaten up with selfishness, and caring only for his own pampered body, while a poor

man in poverty and rags, and full of sores, cannot get the crumbs that fall from his table! Who has not felt contempt for the haughty Pharisee, whose prayer to Heaven was a catalogue of his own fancied virtues, and a mean and selfish depreciation of his fellow man who, after all, in the sight of God, was the worthier of the two!

But the full perfection of this brotherly love is seen only in Jesus Christ, the only perfect man, the only example to be followed from first to last without a shadow of mistrust. What is the Gospel but a record of unselfish love, a long list of self-denying deeds, the history of a life adorned with that lovely charity which is greater than either faith or hope, and which is able to cover a multitude of sins? There was no toil too heavy for Christ to undertake for those whom He had made His brethren, by taking upon Him their nature; there was no journey too long for Him to accomplish, no privation too bitter for Him to bear. What a picture of love and sympathy does He not present to us by the tomb of His friend Lazarus, whose sisters were in grief for the dead; it was as a man that He was a sharer in their sorrow, and wept with those that wept. With what tenderness did He not take little children in His arms

and bless them, rebuking those who, with harder hearts than His, would have forbidden them to come. See how He felt for that falling city, once favoured above all cities, then sinking slowly into ruin, cursed with the blood of the innocent. The greatest efforts of our holiest men fade into utter insignificance before the bright light of His pure, loving life. It was not from some sudden impulse that He acted, warmed by some signal mercy, grateful for some fresh proof of His Father's love. Doing good was the steady principle of His life. As He passed from boyhood to youth, and from youth to manhood, we are taught to look upon Him as growing in all the graces and virtues of a perfect man, passing through every temptation unscathed, "increasing in wisdom and stature, and "in favour with God and man." And as His spirit passed from His body on the Cross of Calvary He set the seal to His own words, and proved the magnitude and sincerity of His own brotherly love; for in that comforting exhortation given to the disciples, who were so soon to forsake Him, He declares: "Greater love hath no man than "this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

What miserable followers do we appear of a life thus exalted and holy! Often must the blush

of shame rise upon our cheeks as we think of the little we do, and the little we care for the souls and the bodies of our brethren in the flesh. It is no wonder that many of us derive but little comfort from the creed we follow and the prayers we say ; that our worship in the temple of our Father degenerates into the service of the lip, void of the spirit and the truth which the Father seeks in all those who kneel before Him.

How many of us have to deplore the uncertainty and doubt which cast their shadow over our spiritual life, and rob us of the comfort the Holy Ghost would impart. The things that are unseen, though surely declared unto us in the book of life, and freely confessed by our lips to be unalterable realities, seem to us rather as pleasant and beautiful things to speak about, and to write about, than as influences and motives to be ever present with us through the battle of life, until death shall end the contest. We can have no true worship, no living faith, no sure and certain hope, without the love of God, and we can have no love of God without a life of earnest work for the good of men ; for if a man "love not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Surely such thoughts as these bring vividly before the mind that noble Apostle, standing in the midst of Mars Hill, preaching to the men of Athens. Longing to cast aside the Heathenish barriers that separated soul from soul, and destroyed that blessed communion that should exist between all the children of a common Father, he declared unto his astonished hearers that "God had made of *one blood* all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." If all the world is knit together by the tie of a common brotherhood, shall we not do our best to bring the wanderers home, that they may inherit the Father's blessing. "There are other sheep which are not of this fold." Some wandering farther and farther into the wilderness, enveloped in almost impenetrable darkness with nought to guide them but the scanty light which nature gives; some struggling beneath the yoke of a hideous idolatry, with their own merciless creations to worship, to which, in their fatal devotion, they sacrifice human blood. Shall we not send to them the Gospel message of pardon and peace? Sacrifice indeed they need; but it stands all ready on the mount of Calvary. 'Tis blood indeed alone that can cleanse them; but 'tis even now

pouring from the wounded side ; human life alone can propitiate and reconcile the outraged justice of the Great Creator ; but it has been offered up once for all, and is now pleaded before the throne as the only power by which humanity can regain the lost birthright, and enter into the coveted rest.

Let us keep vividly before our minds to-day the blessed Saviour of mankind, hastening on from village to village, and from city to city, eager to deliver the message of peace ; His tender heart touched to the quick as He beheld the weary multitudes who were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd ; He beholds them now, wherever they are ; He sees them now as they faint and grow weary with the burden of humanity, without the saving knowledge of their immortality and the Cross by which they may win the crown. If we are indeed His disciples we must hear His voice, and hearing must obey. His words now to us are the same that He uttered in command to His first chosen followers, 'The harvest truly is plenteous but the labourers are few ; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.'

You know that to-day I have to ask for your help to send the Gospel of Salvation, the Christian's good news, to the lands where Jesus is not known. If we would know what the Heathen are now, let us think what we should be without that glorious light which burst upon the plains of Bethlehem when the Son of God came down. Who could bear the burden of sin which weighs heavily on every human soul, without the knowledge that by repentance and faith in the Cross that burden passes away, and is remembered no more! Who could face, without a sad, desponding heart, that last enemy death, which causes this earthly tabernacle to crumble into dust, were it not that angels are revealed sitting at the Christian's tomb, declaring his soul to be in Paradise. Who, with the consciousness that he is immortal, could look forward to the long, long hereafter, a never-ending day with no night, without doubt and dread, had he not the Saviour's loving assurance that He is gone to prepare a place for those who love Him.

All the innumerable lights and comforts of the creed of Jesus shine not upon the darkness of the Heathen's mind; there is the burden of sin *without* the hand that gently bears it away;

there is the longing for something nobler, higher, better than unaided nature can bestow, the burning thirst without the fountain of living water ; the cold and hopeless death without the angels in shining garments sitting at the grave ; the mere suspicion of an hereafter, spent not in the spiritual joys which shall gladden the redeemed in the New Jerusalem.

Let us give them light. Send to them the earnest, self-denying priest of the Church of Christ to tell them of Calvary—of Him who was crucified there, between two malefactors ; of the fountain wherein all human souls may drink and thirst no more ; of the hope of the resurrection to Eternal Life, which takes the sting from death, and victory from the grave. Oh ! ten times happy the thought that we have given a helping hand to those in spiritual need, that one mite, given heartily as followers of Christ, has soothed and saved some sinking soul. Can we not understand the words of the Lord Jesus when He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive ?” Who would not deny himself to save those who are spiritually wounded and spiritually dying ? Love and sympathy such as this has a magic power to shed extra and brighter happi-

ness around the happiest hearth ; to make parents happier in their children's love, and brothers give a warmer grasp of friendship to a brother's hand ; it brings with it a calmer and lovelier peace than the world, with its fleeting joys, can ever shed upon a pilgrim's way ; and as years roll on it gives to memory the sweetest task, to bring to our minds a noble work like that of our own dear Master, whose life was spent in banishing sorrow and darkness, in healing spiritual wounds—in works of brotherly love and charity.

SERMON XXI.

(HARVEST THANKSGIVING.)

UNIVERSAL PROVIDENCE.

1 CORINTHIANS X. v. 26.

“For the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.”

ONCE in the year according to the working of the mighty laws of God, the earth empties her lap, and pours her blessings upon men. It is a time of labour and anxiety; the crops must be gathered in, the barns must be filled, for the rain will soon fall, the frost will harden the earth, and icy winter will soon send all nature to sleep; and while she sleeps, men joy over their gains and grumble over their losses, and prepare, with the same old story of trouble and of toil, for another harvest.

And the harvest is what men call a natural thing; it comes with as much regularity as the rising of the sun, or the falling shades of night.

The seed is sown, and dies and springs into life, and, some much, and some little, we gather into barns.

And so men come to look upon the earth as their own ; the trees were made to give them shade, the flowers to give them joy ; all the pleasures of the open country, with a thousand fragrant odours from the hedgerows, were created solely to minister to the comfort, and gratify the taste of that high and mighty creature called Man !

Now, my brethren, the earth is not ours ; it is lent by one, who, when His harvest day shall come, and when His reapers hear the word of their Lord, will ask from us an account of our deeds, how we have used, and how we have abused His numberless mercies. For,—let us remember it as we walk about our farms, and survey the labours of our hands,—there is not a single ear of corn, not the tiniest bud of the tiniest flower, not a blade of grass, not one leaf of a single tree, that one of us, clever as some fancy themselves to be, could possibly have framed ; and we could not have put that life into them which springs from death, nor made them grow as doth the power of God.

Let our Lord show to us the lesson of the corn-

field. There is the seed—an emblem of that word which the God-made man came down to sow in the heart of every man; the good and the bad soil—the willing and the stubborn heart; the stones and the thorns—the cares and temptations of the world; the reaping and gathering into barns—the work of the angels of God, the final judgment of every soul upon earth; the separation of the tares from the wheat—the banishment of the wicked from the presence of the King.

All nature reads to us a lesson; every flower has a voice, and the great aim and purpose of the Almighty in His countless works which surround us is to lead us to look up unto Him; to repose in His love as the tender Father of the whole universe, “For the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.”

Another harvest time has passed away, and we are met together to-day to give thanks to Almighty God for His mercy in not withholding the fruits of the earth. We all of us know how very much depends upon a harvest. Many a man has been ruined, and many a country severely shaken by a failure in the crops. I can never bring myself to believe that these things are the result of chance. The Almighty Creator has as

much to do with the growing of the fruits of the earth, as if you could see Him put His hand to the seed and quicken it to life, or touch the healthy plant and wither it away. There is not a man healed of disease, not a crop springs from the earth, not a plant withers away but by His power or permission. When He was upon earth in the person of His Son, men saw Him work and wondered. When He healed a man from his sickness, He was claiming to be the Lord and King of every healing power, every soothing medicine that ever banished pain.

“When He multiplied the bread, or changed the water into wine, what was He saying unto men? It is I and no other, who by sunshine and shower, by seed-time and harvest, give food for the use of man. Look! how that which springs from the earth, obeys the words of its Lord; the bread multiplies in My hand and the water is changed to the juice of the grape.”

And what of the fig tree which He withered by His word? Would He not impress upon our minds by this, that He has something to do with the blighting and blasting of the fruits of the earth, that He would punish us for our sins, and lead us to repentance? As men passed by and

saw the dried up tree that never bore fruit again, they doubtless thought it natural enough, and just like what had often taken place before. They knew not that the Lord's hand had been there, and caused it to die. Let us recognize in blighted crops and scanty harvests the working and the power of God. We cannot see what it has pleased God to hide, but, depend upon it, if the veil were once lifted from our eyes, we should then see that there is no such thing as chance, but that all things are either done or permitted by Him to whom the earth and its fulness belong.

We ought to render thanks for the harvest, because we have no right to it. It is given to us in the mercy and long-suffering of God. He is absolute Lord over all. Have we not oftentimes read or heard of famine; men, women and children, wasting to the grave for lack of food, which money could not buy, for God had withheld it? We are too apt to think too much about nature, and too little about God. The Almighty has Himself told us that famine is one of His judgments with which He punishes the iniquity of men. And there is no surer way of retaining God's blessings, and of removing His punishments, than coming in thanksgiving for the

one, and prayer for deliverance from the other, in the name of Jesus Christ. But, independently of all fear of punishment, our hearts ought to overflow with thankfulness unto Him, who showers down upon our heads such numberless blessings, who rewards the toil and labour of our hands, by giving to us the increase of the fruits of the earth. It is not of fear that I would preach to you to-day. I would that we could all fully see and fully feel, how, as true men, we are bound by every noble motive, by every tie of gratitude, to give honor and glory and thanksgiving unto our Creator, who has given to us His blessed Son Jesus Christ, and has added besides all the treasures of the earth in rich abundance. Look at our land compared with many others! There are lands where, instead of yielding to the people a glorious return for toil, the earth will sometimes suddenly open her mouth, and engulf thousands in a fearful grave. Storms and tempests, of the violence of which we can have no idea, will often destroy, in a single night, the steady labour of years, and plunge whole families into desolation and ruin.

I cannot thus call upon you to render thanks to our Father in Heaven, for the harvest which

has vouchsafed to us, without briefly directing our attention to the end of the world, when men shall stand, like a ripe field of corn, before their Maker, and the reapers shall be the angels of God. The Father is a mighty Husbandman, and the world is His field, and we are the seed that is sown. The first seed that was cast upon the earth, our first parent Adam, was once free from all sin and sorrow, all danger of corruption and death. He lived upon the earth without a wicked thought, without an unholy deed. But an enemy sowed tares among the wheat. Sin entered into the world, and then came the blighting of the corn. Now growing with the wheat are innumerable tares, which are unknown to men. We cannot tell who are really and truly those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, for it is the will of the Great Husbandman that both wheat and tares should grow together until the final harvest, when the piercing eye of the Judge shall find out His own.

Let not men imagine that, if they are tares, anything can change them. There is no man doomed to die, for God hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner. "The wheat and the tares of

“the Bible are not seeds of different kinds, the
“tares were once wheat, but had fallen away, and
“become corrupt, had changed in the ground,
“taking part in the fall which cast a blight upon
“the face of all nature, making the very soil in
“which they were sown, the means of conveying
“poison to the roots.” My brethren, if you want a
plant to flourish and bring forth fruit, you don’t
place it where it must be hidden from the rays
of the sun by day, and prevented from drinking
the cooling dew by night; if you did it would
die. God has sown His seed in a world upon
which shine fully the rays of a life-giving Sun,
upon which falls sweetly the precious dew of
Heaven. Look up. There is the Sun of Right-
eousness with healing in His wings, shining
brightly upon the seed that is cast into the
world, longing to warm it into life, and
strengthen it in the hour of its weakness. It is
the Lord Jesus Christ who can give us the power
to grow fit and ripe; ready, when the angels shall
come to reap, to gather the wheat into the
granaries of Heaven, and bind the tares in bundles
to burn them; ready to take our place with the
good grain, which has been dressed and cultured
by the Husbandman’s own Son.

Let this service to-day remind us of the harvest at which we shall be the corn to be reaped. Let these flowers and wheat remind us that everything that the earth brings forth is a gift from the Lord of Heaven, and that we acknowledge this great truth by bringing them into His house, and dedicating the best that we have to His service. If our hearts are thus ever lifted up from nature unto nature's God, leading us to cling to Him and the Cross of His Holy Son, we may look forward to the great reaping time in full hope of eternal happiness in the place prepared for us by Him, who, when He was in the world gave thanks unto His Father for the fruits of the land, thus sealing for ever the truth of the words of the Psalmist and the Apostle, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Amen.

SERMON XXII.

CHRISTIAN TENDERNESS.

EPHESIANS IV. v. 32.

“And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

IN opposition to this grand rule of life, there rises before the mind the character of the man sometimes to be met with in one's daily intercourse with the working world. A cold, hard, stern heart, wrapped round tightly in the folds of an ugly selfishness, caring little for the countless souls that, side by side with him, are passing on to the end; working hard with the eye firmly fixed upon his own advantage, wringing from those who labour for hire the fullest measure of their toil, and grudgingly delivering their scanty reward at the close of the day. There have been, in the world, examples of men high up in the ranks, and

used, or rather cursed with riches, looking on their accumulated gold as an instrument of their own enjoyment, sent for the gratification of every unbridled passion—caring little of the sad blight they may cast upon another's life, for souls that have been led by them to sin, step by step, deeper and deeper, taking at last the fatal plunge, from which, humanly speaking, there seems no hope of rescue. If this be an extreme case, it is not one that Christianity has entirely blotted out. Every now and then, the revelation of a startling crime reminds us that some amongst us are as bad as those who lived in the dim light before the coming of Christ. There are, in this very country, persons as obstinate and unholy as the Jesians were in the days of their grand temple, with their goddess made with hands; with the result there seems to be scarcely any idea of the existence of a power which is omnipotent—none, whatever, of the obligation that ought to bind us in a common brotherhood, that we may render to each other the hearty service of an unselfish love. The miserable plea of doing no harm is often put forth as a set off against the absence of active working benevolence. The Christian

life cannot be an isolated one, each soul independent of its brother, having cares and sorrows and responsibilities that are not interwoven with those of the men and the women who are labouring at the same time, fulfilling the same conditions of life. If it be true, as it is true, that at the last day, when we are to be judged by the man Christ Jesus, who knows our infirmities and all the power that the flesh can wield ; if it be true that each man then must answer for his own deeds, it is not the less true, that many of those deeds, for which he will have to answer, are closely interwoven with the lives of other men; laws of Christian love violated and forgotten, appeals for Christian kindness slighted and dishonoured, the declaration of the inspired Apostle shivering to atoms the plea of our ignorance, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

It is not kind to attribute unto men unholy motives, when we know nothing of the reasons that have led them to a certain course of action, which may, after all, have cost them many a bitter pang for conscience sake. It is not kind for a rich man to turn scornful and proud looks

upon his poorer brethren, who are honest and honourable in the station of life to which God has called them. It is not kind to be a friend when fortune smiles, and when she frowns, forsake the man whom, in his prosperity, we appeared to honour. It is not kind for those highly gifted by nature, to laugh at and despise the honest, though feeble endeavours of the weak. The rich man was unkind as he sat comfortable and easy, clothed in purple and fine linen, when he knew that outside, at his own gate, dogs were licking the sores of Lazarus the beggar, who could not get the crumbs that fell from his table. The priest and the Levite were unkind as they passed by the prostrate form of the wounded Samaritan, leaving him, for all they cared, to perish. And all men are unkind who do not do their best to alleviate the countless sorrows that day by day pass before them, like some grim and ghastly army, who do not carry in their hearts the rule of the kindest Man, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

And now we must pass on briefly to consider the second clause in this comprehensive exhortation to practical holiness—that which forces

upon us the Christian's obligation to be tender-hearted. It is not an uncommon thing for men to sit down with folded arms, and to declare that they are as the Almighty made them, that no prayers, and no work of theirs, can alter the qualities of their natural heart. If such be really the case, then, every call to work, every exhortation to pray, every promise of reward, is a mockery and a myth, deluding us with a hope that comforts for a little, but has no prospect of future realization. Many of us have wrong conceptions of the Christian character, and of the power that can change the natural heart, indulging in idle dreams of what we think they ought to be, rather than believing what Heaven declares they are. A vain hope, indeed it is, that we are to be perfected in a day: the Christian virtues are the result of the most increasing cultivation; the honest, prayerful toil of earnest men, blessed and animated by the welcome dew of Heaven. With some there is no labour to prepare the soil, no love, no warmth, to cherish the good seed as it falls—it is trodden down and the fowls of the air devour it; it falls upon a rock and withers for lack of moisture; it is choked by the thorns that spring up beside it, when no hand cares to

pluck away the thorns and cherish the seed, that it may bring forth fruit a hundred-fold. If we are conscious that our hearts are not filled, as they ought to be, with Christian tenderness, we have heard and read of One who is able, if we are willing, to melt the hard, unfeeling heart, to change the stone into flesh.

If it were not possible for us to gain His help, if it were not possible for our cries to reach His ear, or for His Spirit to bless our labour, the Apostle, who was himself tender-hearted, would never have given us the exhortation, would not have deluded us with a hope that could never be realized. The world may rise up with its empty reproach against the creed of Christ, that it teaches an unworthy manhood, moved and swayed by soft and unmanly emotions : such reproaches fall powerless before the fact, that the noblest and brightest of the sons of humanity—men of glorious and cultivated intellect, men of heroic bravery, of martyr-like endurance, have not been ashamed to let the world see that they were tender hearted, feeling deeply for the sorrows and sins that have, from time to time, banished the sunshine from a brother's life. For the Christian it is enough to open the pages of Heaven's

revelation, and to read there of One who beheld the God-chosen city of old about to fall into ruin and desolation, and as, with a prophet's power, he saw the armies of the foe, gathering together for her destruction, her stately buildings falling stone from stone, her children aliens and exiles, He wept over Zion, the pride and glory of His race. For the Christian it is enough to see the same kind and tender heart, remembering, when absent, the friends He loved, plunged into sorrow by the hand of death; and weeping as He beheld the desolation wrought by our last enemy, who, after all, can only kill the body.

And this tenderness of heart leads us on to the last words of the text; if we have a heart disposed to pity and compassion, loving to show kindness to the faults of our brethren, loving to cover with a mantle a multitude of sins that lead to a multitude of sorrows, the little injuries that men may commit against us will be forgiven and forgotten, dwarfed and obliterated by the side of the countless transgressions we have committed against the majesty of God. Who amongst us, that has anything like a just sense of the guilt upon his own soul, could harbour ill-will, or the spirit of vengeance, against

anyone that has wronged him. "How oft," says St. Peter, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, until seven times?" "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee "until seven times, but until seventy times "seven." Boundless towards us has been the forgiveness of God for Christ's sake. Old men, for long weary years the servants of sin, spending the vigour of their manhood, and the best of their powers, as worshippers in the world's well-filled temple, have come at last—they have asked and it has been given unto them, they have knocked and the door has been opened. Young men, grown old before their time in dissipation and the service of the flesh, have come in penitence as they found their feet slipping from beneath them, and the realities of another life about to burst upon them—to them has been given the assurance of the forgiveness of God for Christ's sake. As our Master was sitting at meat in the house of Simon the Pharisee, there came behind Him a woman weeping, weeping for the sins that burdened her soul and shut her out from the peace of Heaven; penitent, and longing for forgiveness, she began to wash His feet with her tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of

her head, and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment. It is not difficult to picture to ourselves the indignation of the self-righteous, the sham holiness of the Pharisee; "This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, for she is a sinner." Fools, and blind! He was a Prophet and He did know. He is a Prophet still, and knows the burden of each sinner as he comes in penitence to His feet. As we feel that God, for His sake, has blotted out the long score against us, in love and gratitude our eyes look heavenward, and then, with the memory of this mercy shedding its bright light upon our path, we work earnestly as members of the Christian brotherhood, as living branches of the vine Christ Jesus; we become "kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us."

Amen.

SERMON XXIII.

THE FORFEITED BLESSING.

GENESIS XXVII. 38.

“ And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my Father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.”

THERE is not a single history in the whole of the Bible that presents to us a more touching appeal for sympathy than that wherein the two brothers, Esau and Jacob, stand side by side by an aged father's dying bed, each seeking a blessing from the hand so soon to lie still for ever.

There is, and there must be, while humanity shall last, an awe inspiring power, a fearful solemnity in the presence of death; independently of the parting anguish, the bursting heart, the choking sob, as we behold our kith and kin going away and leaving us lonely and sad; independently

of all that, we feel as the soul goes home, we feel the existence of a baffling mystery, the presence of an irresistible Divinity.

One would have thought that this alone were enough to banish all fraud and hypocrisy far from the chamber of the dying ; enough to make all men dash aside their masks, at least for a time, as a kindred soul is passing through the gate that opens on eternity. Not so, proclaims the history of a fallen world ; not so, proclaims the unholy memory of many a degrading scene, as the living have wrangled for the gold of the dying, and fought, almost before the failing pulse had ceased to beat, fought like beasts of prey over the coveted spoil. One is staggered in the history of the early world, as its pages are unfolded before us, one is staggered to behold him who was chosen as an honoured chief by the will of Heaven, stealthily approaching his dying father with a lie in his right hand, and gaining, by a heartless imposture, the blessing of the firstborn. But we must remember that clearly in the same inspired pages, are traced the evil and misfortune that tracked the footsteps of the *mother* who forgot for a time a mother's responsibility, and the son who had recourse to the

weapons of a coward, and deceived a blind and feeble patriarch. Never more as the long years rolled on, and trials and temptations came thick and fast, never more did the mother behold her son, or kiss his cherished brow. Never more did the favourite son listen to his mother's voice, not even once again, to receive her parting blessing, she, too, in turn was called away.

The words once uttered could never be recalled. The man who had bartered his birthright could never rescind his bargain, but he who had won it by fraud must suffer for his sin. A chequered and stormy life—anxious waiting and bitter servitude—dissension in his own house—separation from his favourite boy—famine and poverty, till at last weary and worn, in the very land wherein his children were in bondage, he yielded up his tired spirit, and sought the home wherein is no deceitful blindness, but the vision is strengthened in all things to behold the everlasting truth.

The words of my text bring forcibly before us the stormy regret of a passionate nature, a strong man bowed down for a moment by an unexpected denial of a coveted blessing. Our hearts cannot fail to sympathize with Esau as we think of the bitterness of his grief, as he lifted

up his voice and wept ; but, much as we may despise the meanness of his brother, we dare not forget that Esau had despised his Heaven-descended privileges, and brought on his own shoulders the misfortune over which he wept. Spurning, as we ought, the deceit of the coward, the artifice of the liar, we cannot fail, at the same time, to behold the finger of Heaven as retribution overtook an ungodly man at the very moment when perhaps he had banished from his memory his sacrilegious and irreverent act. The purposes of God, as the years of our life are rolling on fast towards eternity, are all sure to be worked out, accomplished, completed. The wicked are forced to work His will, pressed by infinite power into a service they despise ; often in the history of nations have great and mighty renovations, reformations affecting for time and eternity the destiny of millions ; often have they been wrought by instruments as unworthy as they were unconscious in whose service they were toiling, seemingly moved by mighty passions, by cruelty and ambition, but really accomplishing the will of Him at whose summons they have returned to their native dust. Jacob, by a sin for which he suffered, for which he doubtless

bitterly repented, was the means of wringing the passionate heart of an impulsive and thoughtless man, who treated with contempt the cherished birthright of a nation, from which hereafter was to be born Messiah, the Prince of Peace. But we, as we sit upon the judgment seat, and pass sentence on the acts of our fellow men : we, suffering under the burden of humanity, must be gentle, considerate, kind. As the sinner passes before us and we see the stain upon the robe, we must bow the head and pity our brother, for we, too, are verily guilty before God. Although, now, years and years have rolled away since the standard of the Cross was first planted in the world, and thousands of martyrs, and prophets, and evangelists have toiled and suffered to bring us nearer unto Christian purity, yet still, even though our Churches and altars are multiplying, still we are forced to pass silently away, not daring to cast the first stone. Feeling bitterly the burden of inherited and actual sin, having the spirit of the publican smiting on his breast and suing for mercy, we can turn our eyes upwards as there comes before us the memory of our despised birthright, and say to our Father, as Esau said unto his, " Hast thou but one

“ blessing, oh my Father, bless me, even me also,
“ oh my Father.”

And not the less do we pity those who fall, because step by step in the deep and dark descent they have earned every pang, courted every blow. We pity them not the less because their own acts have led them into ruin ; the thought that by his own act he had forfeited the blessing, was no alleviation of Esau's sorrow as he lifted up his voice and wept ; rather is the pang the sharper, the burden the heavier. The memory of misfortunes we might have warded off, the penalty of sins we might have left undone ; every misfortune that is the result of our own deliberate act is surely a deeper pain and harder to bear. What mean the loud and passionate cries from men with grey hairs and feeble limbs, loud and passionate cries for some of the years that have gone that they might give them unto God ? What means that regret that fills the soul as year after year rolls away, and we all find ourselves approaching eternity, and but little of our task accomplished ? All these are humanity's unflinching confession that our hardest burdens are those we heap up for our own backs, those which often trust in God and prayer in the name of Jesus might have averted for ever.

Oh ! how many wasted lives pass before us in our short time ! How often do we hear the lament of the aged and the groans of the dying. The refuge is sought when it seems too late : the eye is turned to the Cross when the vision is too feeble to behold it : the hand of help is grasped when there is no strength to cling ; the prayer is uttered when the voice is too weak and the heart too impure for heaven to hearken to the cry. The world is like a generation of Esaus, striving at the last moment to seize the blessing as it passes from their grasp : the last day of their earthly opportunity deepens into night, and there is nothing left but the lifting up of the voice to weep over a misspent past—the father's blessing and the suppliant's birth-right passed on to another. And if these things are burdens of our own making, not the less do we pity those who have to bear them ; the Christian is taught another lesson in the life of Him who is willing to bear all our burdens and carry them far away, so that some day they shall have no power to press upon the sin-weary spirit. It was no consolation to Jacob's mother, when, year after year passed away and she never again beheld the face she loved, to remember that her

own sin had bereaved her of her child. Because multitudes of our brethren are sinning every day, and falling deeper and deeper into the mire, by their own deliberate forgetfulness of Heaven and Heaven's law, still should our Christian pity be active with the love of Christ and strive to win them to the knowledge of a purer way, to the living of a better life. To every man who sells his birthright there comes the day of his passionate weeping. He is so framed by the hand of his Maker as to be unable to close his eyes through life and death to the certainty of his immortality, and we may well remember with trembling that, thousands of years afterwards, the inspired Spirit thought well to point us to the touching example of the fruitlessly penitent Esau, declaring in the Epistle to the Hebrews that "he found no place for repentance though he sought bitterly with tears."

Some of us, my brethren, may even now be standing on the brink of a great temptation; there may be coming upon some of us a crisis in our lives, and we may be able to catch a glimpse of the shadow as it casts it before. We may be overtaken, weary and weak and unguarded, and tempted to sin, and fall miserably beneath the

temptation—even as Esau listened to the craving of the flesh and sold his birthright. Different temptations for different men and different women. Oh! let us not be mistaken by the false glitter, taken in by false promises, allured by voices that are not true. If there be any act we think of performing which is likely to cast a stumbling block in our way to Heaven and our happiness on earth, let us ponder and pray ere it be too late. Worldly advantages, the momentary gain, are nothing when weighed in the balance. Knowing what we do of the purity of Jesus Christ, knowing what we do of His love, His suffering, His self-denial, His willingness, His truth, His power, His humility, can we not fall on our knees and ask Him for His guidance; not the less is He present now than when He healed the sick and stilled the waves of the boiling sea; can we not ask Him in confidence for the spirit that battled with His temptations and won the victory in Gethsemane? There are some things that when once done can never be undone; which tear from us a blessing that can never shine upon us again, which leave us like Esau of old, fruitlessly seeking for penitence in tears. As we summon before our

imagination the striking picture of his loneliness and desolation, let us look to the Cross of Jesus Christ and do what He commands, and then no deed shall ever leave us hopelessly to weep over the Christian's birthright, which He died to regain, torn from our grasp for ever.

SERMON XXIV.

THE HOLY ANGELS.

S. LUKE, XV. pt. of v. 10.

“There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

STRANGE and wonderful indeed to the human understanding are the mysteries of the Gospel revelation. Jesus Christ upon the Cross of Calvary is the *one great event* in the world's history to which all things, under the old dispensation looked forward, to which all things under the new look back.

“Behold the Man” is the cry of the Church, behold the Man around whom all things cluster and find their truest harmony; behold the answer to the shadowy visions of the prophets, the light and solution of the dark sayings of inspiration.

If I can but once behold Him with the keen eye of living faith and clasp the vision to my

heart as the reality that pardons and blesses and ennobles the human mind and soul, then in deed and truth am I prepared for any other revelation and bow my heart in reverent submission as the Almighty discloses His mysterious mercies, even though my head burn and throb in fruitless efforts to comprehend them. If with the eye of faith I can behold Jesus the mediator dying for me in agony and desolation, I am not surprised that the whole created universe should be working in harmony for the salvation of my soul, that angels in Heaven should rejoice over one poor sinner that repenteth.

Twice in the same chapter, twice from the Holy lips that never lied, comes the wonderful truth, that each wandering sheep in the whole family of God, is an object of tender care to that unseen and sinless throng who are worshippers in the temple above. As they dwell in Heaven in the presence of the loving Godhead, what wonder that some rays of the Almighty's love to man should shine upon them and kindle in them an irresistible devotion to the whole human race, whom Jesus died to save! Surely their love to us is but a ray of that Divine love, which rescued us while yet we were sinners, which yearned for

us in the very midst of our rebellion. If they rejoice as we return from the wilderness to the fold, their joy is for the honour and glory of our Creator and theirs. They are jealous for His honour and His worship: jealous as they behold that wondrous love of the Father and matchless sacrifice of the Son, but little heeded by wilful masses and millions who are striving to satisfy the soul's great thirst at the world's bitter fountains: jealous as they behold the way to earthly and unsanctified shrines trodden and worn by the tread of countless throngs: jealous as they behold mighty intellects, stubborn and unbending before the mysteries of revelation, which things they themselves in the humility of their sinless and pure natures ardently desire to look into; and their very jealousy kindles within them a thrill of Heavenly joy as even one poor sinner turns from the error of his ways and kneels before the Cross of the Lamb.

Can it ever be that all God's wonderful and complicated Providence, with orders of angels and of men all toiling for the lost sheep who are wandering daily away from the true shepherd's fold: can it ever be that all the agony of Gethsemane, some little bitterness of which was

warded off by an angel's ministry : can it ever be that the loving plan of redemption revealed and attested by inspiration and sealed in the blood of martyrs : can it ever be that all this should at last be of no avail to bring some wilful sheep back again to their deserted home ! Looking on to the second Advent, doubtless with the sorrow that formed part of His heavy burden, Jesus Himself asks the dispiriting question, " Nevertheless " when the Son of man cometh, shall He find " faith on the earth ? "

The words which I have chosen for my text naturally lead us briefly to contemplate the office and ministry of the holy angels as revealed by the inspired word. You know there are many in this present intellectual age in which so-called philosophy has multitudes of conceited disciples, there are many who, like the Sadducees of old, refuse to believe at all in the existence of angels : it is not enough that their existence is over and over again asserted and recognised in the Bible : where the intellect and the Bible clash some modern philosophers would banish the Bible to the region of myth and fancy. Your presence here to-day, my brethren, is proof enough that you have not cast in your

ot with theirs ; let our cry be, " Lord, we believe; ' help Thou our unbelief." We cannot afford in his, the twilight of our souls' existence, we cannot afford to throw away any help that God in His mercy holds out to us ; we all of us recognise and admit the bitterness and reality of the warfare we are waging, and it is surely no little comfort that God has appointed a sinless and loving throng, not only to be witnesses of the struggle but messengers and ministers of strength and consolation. It is not for us to ask why He should appoint others to help us, when, in His omnipotence, He Himself is our help in the time of need. We can easily see, if we look around us, that this is a ministerial dispensation : we are dependent on each other. God could sustain the helpless infant from the very hour of its birth, but He has appointed the mother's loving heart and hand to minister to its many wants. Thus, too, are the angels " ministering spirits sent forth " to minister unto them who shall be heirs of " salvation."

It was no merely poetic imagination that moved the Psalmist of Israel to sing, " The angel of the " Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him. " He shall give His angels charge concerning

“thee and in their hands they shall bear thee up,
“lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a
“stone.”

How often are we, like the servant of the prophet Elisha, sad and despondent at the host of difficulties arrayed against us in the spiritual contest: our faith is not strong enough to realise the presence of unseen hosts marshalled beside us; we are slow to believe that they which are for us are mightier than they which be against us; “and Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee, “open his eyes that He may see. And the Lord “opened the eyes of the young man and he saw, “and behold the mountain was full of horses and “chariots of fire round about Elisha.”

In that wonderful book, the Revelation of S. John, we have the picture of an angel offering incense with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne: the prayers of those who in God's own good time had cast aside the burden of mortality, still in their spirits giving utterance to the universal instinct of all created beings: the prayers of all penitent seekers after holiness as their petitions went up for their own souls and for all that were near and dear to them: the prayers of mothers and fathers for

their children, of friends for friends and brothers for brothers, the litanies and supplications of nations on their knees, the words of children lisping the name of Christ, the feeble ejaculation of the dying Christian : each and every prayer of the living and the dead breathed in humility of heart and lowliness of spirit, was united with the purifying incense of the ministering angel and was laid in love upon the golden altar before the throne.

Of how many comforts which Jesus came to reveal would not the cold materialism and scepticism of the present age cruelly deprive us ! Angels who behold the beatific vision tenderly watch over the little ones, the poor in spirit and the meek in heart of the shepherd's flock, " Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, " for I say unto you that in Heaven their angels " do always behold the face of My Father which " is in Heaven." Take heed proud and scornful spirit that sneers at the lowly heart imbued with the spirit of our master Christ : the object of your scorn is not as you would fancy, defenceless and alone : those who are admitted into the Holy of Holies of the Heavenly temple, and behold what will be hereafter the joy of the redeemed, watch

jealously beside the meek and lowly in heart who have been admitted into the congregation of Christ's flock.

The revelation of my text, too, comes to us with peculiar power and consolation ; it assures us of the love and sympathy of those who need no redemption. "There is joy in the presence of "the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Far off in the courts of Heaven, among angels and archangels who have never sinned, the ear of faith may catch the notes of holy music, ever swelling, ever grander in praise unto God and the Lamb. This joy in Heaven is not for the just, it is not for the holy. Some poor sinner humbled to the dust, overburdened by the weight of his woe, has heard at last the welcome sound of a Saviour's love and has turned his heart in prayer unto the Cross. He may have wandered long a wilful sheep from the shepherd's fold, wandered into the wilderness away from his God: but loving eyes have watched Him and loving hands have beckoned him home again, and now there is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth. So precious is even one soul, so priceless is every son of man in the eyes of his Maker that the coming home of even one among

the millions upon earth is enough to cause the angels and all the hosts of Heaven to tune their harps and raise their voices in holy music before the throne, whereon is seated with the Father the Saviour of the world. The Church on earth, too joins in the eucharistic song ; “ with angels and “ archangels and with all the company of Heaven “ we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, ever “ more praising Thee and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, “ Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of “ Thy glory ; Glory be to Thee O Lord most “ high !”

SERMON XXV.

PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO ARE NEAR AND DEAR TO US.

ST. JOHN XI. part of v. 8.

“Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.”

It is not difficult to imagine that our Lord would be glad, after the toil of teaching a thankless and unbelieving crowd in a rebellious city, to retire for a short time to a pleasant country village, there to repose in the true friendship of affectionate hearts. It is written in the Bible that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. He saw something, doubtless, within them that drew His heart to theirs, some goodness, some nobility in their characters. You must often have noticed how very much more lovable some are than others: by their looks and their voices and their deeds, possessing power to win affection. It is not too much to

say that this feeling, whose influence we cannot but experience every day, existed in all purity, in all holiness, within the breast of our Lord. He would naturally, as a man, be attracted by all that was holy, all that was noble, all that was beautiful, all that was true : while His Divinity could pierce beneath hypocrisy and see that all these qualities were not the miserable counterfeits that so often dupe those who have only the power to see with the vision of men. St. John, the eagle-eyed Apostle and Divine, was called the disciple whom Jesus loved ; and did not his future career justify that love thus bountifully bestowed ? For years and years after His Master had gone home, he fought against the tide of an evil world and won back sheep to the Good Shepherd's fold. Persecution, banishment, torture, were all willingly undergone for the sake of the Cross : and so wonderful was his power among his fellow men, that even when they saw him die they would not believe that he was dead ; but some weak minds, misunderstanding their Master's words, " If I will that he tarry till I " come, what is that to thee ? " perpetuated the groundless legend that for years the earth heaved about his grave, and that the dust was gently

stirred by the regular pulses of his breath.

But to return to our more immediate subject. "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." How much is implied in that short verse! Who would not long for the love of the God-man, which has a power to shed a bright beam of light, to form a halo of glory around every rich man's house, every poor man's cottage! Shall we say that we have it not? If so, why has it not been given to us as freely as it has been offered? Can He see in us nothing noble, nothing honest, nothing beautiful, nothing just and true? Not in ourselves, no, not in ourselves; but we need not despair—walk on beneath the shadow of the Cross—it is there, where His own blood was shed, that all our virtue, all our beauty lies—it has power to cover our deformity, to hide our ugliness, to cure our diseases, to cast over us the shield of honour and of truth. And if we have gone to Him, if we are walking beside Him, and praying to Him as far as we know how—shall we say that He does not love us because we are tried sorely by temptation and fall every day we live. Did not St. Peter fall, and deny Him in the cruellest hour of his loneliness—was he not forgiven and

his sin forgotten when he so bitterly wept for it ; did he not love Him ? Shall we say that we have it not because we are often in doubt and perplexity, the clouds gathering around us and obscuring the light of truth ? Did He cast St. Thomas off as his faith grew weak in his risen Lord ? Was he not forgiven as he burst forth afterwards in the rapturous confession, " My Lord and my God ;" did he not love Him ? Shall we say that we have it not because we have often to mourn and to weep, to linger over the sick bed, and soothe the dying hours, to feel all the bitterness of what seems an untimely bereavement ? Is it not written that Jesus loved that once happy family at Bethany ; loved, too, with a love subject to none of the changes and chances of our fallen nature, but burning on brightly and for ever in all its matchless purity ? And yet for them, too, the clouds of sorrow began to gather ; for them, too, was in store all the bitterness of bereavement ; the message was sent to their absent Friend and Master, " Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest "is sick."

We must believe, then, that sorrow and temptation and perplexity upon earth are no

proofs that our Father has forsaken us ; rather are they the signs that He would call us away from the thoughts of earth to that happy resting place above, where no sighs are ever heard and no tears can ever flow. We know full well how likely we are to forget God when everything goes well with us ; who can tell how many can now look back upon the days of their sorrow, and kiss the hand that held them back as they were wandering away from the road to their eternal home ; how many souls can lift up the voice of praise, that one they loved was laid upon a bed of sickness, from which their prayer went up in the hour of their desolation, " Lord, behold, " he whom Thou lovest is sick."

How few of us feel within our inmost hearts the absolute obligation and necessity laid upon every Christian of praying for others, and yet, if only we could draw aside the curtain that hides the unseen, doubtless we should behold miracle after miracle, and wonder after wonder, wrought by men and women and children, by the silent, secret, agency of prayer ! There is one notable instance given to us in the history of the early Church, and of which perhaps many of you have never heard. There is no more touching and

pathetic picture than that of the mother of St. Augustine, weeping and praying that her son might be rescued from his evil ways. From his early years, the man who afterwards became so glorious an example of fidelity to his God, from his early years infidelity and the companionship of infidels had led him into every vicious practice, every unholy diversion. With peculiar pleasure, with peculiar admiration, we behold the mother's increased fervour in her supplication to Heaven ; as he fell deeper and deeper into the mire, she still hoped on, and wept for him the tears he himself ought to have shed ; she prayed as if the double earnestness of her prayers could have atoned for his disregard of the worship of his God. In after life, when he had been led to God and to contemplate the things of Heaven, he gratefully acknowledges what he owes to that loving mother's voice, pleading in tears. He says in his Confessions, " And Thou sentest Thine hand " from above, and drewest my soul out of that " profound darkness, my mother, Thy faithful " one weeping to Thee for me, more than " mothers weep the bodily deaths of their " children. For she, by that faith and spirit " *which she had from Thee, discerned the death*

“ wherein I lay, and Thou heardest her, O Lord,
 “ and despised not her tears—yea, O Lord, Thou
 “ heardest her.”

A mother or a friend like that, who, bearing your image on the heart, can literally besiege the doors of Heaven in supplication for your eternal welfare, is worth all earthly honours, all earthly riches, all earthly happiness; these all pass away like a tale that is told, but the love of a faithful heart, pure and lovely in this world, is ten thousand times more pure and lovelier far in the world to come.

The absolute necessity for a true man to pray is well expressed in the words which Tennyson puts into the mouth of one of his heroes :

“ But thou,
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?”

In the very first prayer we are taught to lisp, we are guarded against that selfishness which would grasp every blessing for ourselves. The words “Our

“Father” taught us by the Redeemer Himself, show us that God is not exclusively the Father of any one child of man ; but that we are all members of the Christian brotherhood, for all of whom our voices should ascend before the throne of Grace. We are all of us sick, even, as Lazarus upon the bed of death ; the leprosy of sin has eaten away the life of our souls and cast its cold blight upon every thought ; there is a daily and an hourly fight—a wrestle with the powers of darkness which must last while life continues, and the best, the only way, to obtain the well-tempered weapons from the armoury of God, is to pray fervently for ourselves and our brethren, to send a message upward unto Jesus Christ, in the words of the sorrowing sisters of Bethany, “ Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.”

I know there are some who will say in their humility, which is better than pride, that they are not worthy to go before God and plead for the health of soul and body for others : that they scarce can utter the words which show forth their own penitence, their own contrition, and plead for the blessings of their daily life—“ The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,” saith St. James, and we are

not righteous, our prayers are not fervent, they cannot be effectual. But here we are arguing wrongly, we are making too much of the man, too little of the Saviour. God answers our prayers, forgetting our unworthiness in the worthiness of His own Son. The beautiful, encouraging words of the Gospel must strike home to our hearts with irresistible comfort and power, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you."

Our Holy Church, in the true spirit of the Gospel, puts the right words into the mouths of her children who come to the blessed Sacrament, "We do not presume to come to this Thy table, trusting in our own righteousness; but in Thy manifold and great mercies. Although we be unworthy through our manifold sins to offer unto Thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech Thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord." If men prayed not because they are unworthy, no prayer could ever ascend to Heaven, for there was only one man, there is only one man, who among the thousands that have lived and died, was ever

worthy through purity and holiness to hold converse with a pure and Holy God, and that is He, who, in the days of His manhood bid us pray to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God.

As long as we have to fight this mortal fight, struggling on to immortality, the soul and the body must have their sicknesses. We must for our ourselves and for others call now upon the Good Physician to heal us—we must seek Him while He may be found. Some day, in God's own good time, our sicknesses and sorrows will pass away. The bright light of Heaven will for ever dispel the dark clouds of earth, and we, and they for whom we have prayed, and who have prayed for us, our friends and brethren in the flesh, and ten times our friends and brethren in the brotherhood of Christ, with all the family of God, shall cast aside this mortal which is sorrow, and put on immortality which is joy, a joy whose brightness can never fade, for it is in the presence of God and the Lamb, who are from everlasting to everlasting.

SERMON XXVI.

OUR BELOVED WHO ARE GONE.

REV. XIV. 13.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

THESE words introduce to us a subject the consideration of which is attended with much pain, and enshrouded in much mystery; it is hidden by a cloud through which there shines, just bright enough for human eyes to behold it, a ray of heavenly light. Men of all grades—the rich, the poor, the learned, the ignorant, seem to shrink with an instinctive dread from the contemplation of death, regarding his call as the summons of an enemy to those who die, as a herald of enduring anguish to those who have to mourn the dead they love. But cannot the Christian clasp to his heart the faith that is freely offered? One great object of the anguish which the God-man

endured was to wrest from death his coveted spoil, to plant the standard of victory over every grave, to press the great enemy of mankind into His service to make him a messenger sent upon earth to call His followers home that they might rest from their labours. From henceforth all the myths and fables which hung around the Hea-then's grave, crowding the minds of the living with images and fancies which, however beautiful, were but a sorry comfort in the hour of separation, all these were to vanish, and behold! upon every last earthly resting place of those who die in their Lord may be seen the angel clothed in white raiment, the herald of the resurrection to life.

But, after all, it requires all the faith we can summon by prayer, pleading in anguish before the throne of God, to make us calm by the bed of death; to say "Father, thy will, not mine be done," as some well-loved form is sinking, fading and falling like a leaf in the autumn. Most of us do not feel sure of the blessing that is promised; we cannot realize that the dead are to live again; Lazarus came back from his three days' grave, but he had no message to the living concerning the state of his departed soul; the son of the widow of Nain, carried to the gate of the

city and summoned back to life, could give no description of the sleep of death ; and the young maiden just called away had no words for those who loved her concerning the place where her spirit had gone, before it heard the voice of the Master, and re-entered its tabernacle of clay. Beyond the fact that the dead in Christ are blessed, and blessed for evermore, we know not what they are doing ; beyond the fact that for them to die is to be with Christ, we know not whither they have gone ; beyond the fact that they, even now, have joy and peace such as they never had, never could have, in a world of cares and burdens and crosses, we know not what their blessing is, nor the proportion it bears to that full burst of triumphant happiness after the resurrection, after the judgment, when the crown is placed upon their heads, and they are enrolled for ever among the citizens of Heaven. Let me quote to you the words of the poet Keble, who seemed to be gifted with a keener sight into the things pertaining unto God than is usually given to men :—

“ Then, fainting soul, arise and sing ;

Mount, but be sober on the wing ;

Mount up, for Heaven is won by prayer ;

Be sober, for thou art not there ;
Till Death the weary spirit free,
Thy God hath said, 'Tis good for thee
To walk by faith and not by sight :
Take it on trust a little while ;
Soon shalt thou read the mystery right
In the full sunshine of His smile."

I know, my brethren, it is not pleasant to dwell for long upon mournful, melancholy subjects, summoning before us bitter memories and scenes of pain ; but is it not good for us sometimes to ponder over that which has already taken place with those whom we fondly remember, and must some day take place also with ourselves ? Amid all the mystery that hangs around the grave, I would ask you to look upon it in the light which the Bible sheds ; it is this alone that can make the prospect anything but terrible, while it will some day—God only knows when—take the sting and bitter pang from the reality. It is well to beware of theories and fancies which have been invented by the human brain to represent unto us the mission and the power of death ; but there are doubtless some which, while they maintain nothing contrary to Divine revelation, have a soothing and happy

influence upon the human spirit when sighing in distress. Some of you, doubtless, will remember those touching lines of an American poet, in which death is represented unto us as a reaper commissioned to cull the flowers of earth, to be transplanted and to bloom in the fields of light above. The mother, in pain and anguish, gives up, must give up, the little helpless children she has laboured and prayed to save from death, but she is comforted by the knowledge that she is to meet them again all bright and blooming, and free for ever from pain ; and this surely will fill her with no thought of rebellion against the hand that beckoned them away ! Will not an ardent and prayerful looking forward to the day of their joyful reunion give to her soul many an hour of heavenly meditation, and enable her to say, in the concluding words of the poet—

“ Oh ! not in cruelty, not in wrath,
The Reaper came that day ;
'Twas an angel visited the green earth,
And took the flowers away.”

You will observe, my brethren, that I am bringing before you not so much the fact that we ourselves have to die, as the feelings that ought to be

ours as we contemplate death, and have to mourn for those who are taken from us. It is no mere sentimentality, no sign of weakness, in the strongest, the most manly amongst us, to remember fondly our dead, and to revisit their tombs and tend them affectionately, planting flowers as offerings of our love. Never, never more than here are the false, false notions of the senseless world exhibited in all their want of beauty. What man need be ashamed to show that he cherishes for ever the memory of those he loves ; that no time, no misfortune, no gain, can make him forget the grasp of that "dear, "dead hand that is now no more." If there be within our nature anything of the nobility of human love, if there be any remnant of the Divine image, we dare not strive, merely to gain applause amongst the heartless, with their false notions of manliness, to stifle the emotion that broke forth in all sincerity as Jesus Christ visited the grave of His friend. Strange and marvellous revelation in the Divine word does that short verse contain : "Jesus wept." Consecrated for ever are the tears, that come from the heart, shed over the graves of departed friends. There is nothing in the whole teaching

and example of Christ that would bid us steel our hearts against the tenderness and sympathy planted within the noblest natures, exhibited once in all their beauty as those two mourning sisters, Martha and Mary, led their cherished Friend to the grave at Bethany, and witnessed His emotion at the sight of their distress, His own human sorrow for the death of the friend His Divinity was about to summon back again to life and to labour.

I daresay most of us have visited some cemetery or churchyard on a summer's day, all cheerful and bright with flowers and buds, and the leaves and blossoms of sheltering trees. Doubtless many will say that it matters little where the dead rest : in some rude pit on the field of battle, or beneath the waves of the sea ! It matters not, perhaps, to the dead ; but it does matter to the living who love them ; it matters to the Christian who believes in the resurrection unto life, and the bond that firmly binds together the saints upon earth and the saints in Paradise.

“ I like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls
The burial-ground God's-Acre ! it is just ;
It consecrates each grave within its walls,
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.”

Yes, calling the burial ground God's-Acre fitly represents the Christian creed. It is God's-Acre ; a garden in which seed is sown for the great harvest day. We plant there each cherished body when the life has fled, in sure and certain hope that it will some day be quickened, made to live again in glorious brightness ; not the weak frame subject while on earth to pain, disease, and death, but a form on which shall be the stamp and impress of Divinity, which shall continue for ever ; for at that time " God shall " wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there " shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor " crying ; neither shall there be any more pain, " for the former things are passed away"—remembered perhaps as a dream in the night, banished in the brightness of the morning dawn.

I would not place before you reflections like these did I not firmly believe them to be of real practical value, with influence on our lives beyond calculation. The grand object of all meditation is to bring us into that state of mind which shall cause us so to labour with all love and energy as to bring forth the richest harvest of good among men and before God. It has been remarked over and over again, and tested too by many a

struggling soul's experience, that there is nothing which causes the tears of repentance to flow more freely than to go back to the days of peace and purity, and to reflect on the change that sin may have produced in our condition since those whom we once loved have been taken away. I say nothing now of the thoughts that often arise within us as we stand beside their graves concerning their power to watch over us as guardian angels, their willingness, in their nearer communion and closer fellowship with Christ, to pray that our faith fail not. We may hope and trust that it may be so ; the thought is too beautiful, too comforting, to be cast idly aside ; it seems as if the ardent listener might catch the tones of the Saviour's voice, whispering in His love : " If " it were not so, I would have told you."

These are some of the feelings we all must have, for 'tis humanity's portion ; but we may console ourselves with the assurance that the dead in the Lord are blessed indeed, for a voice from Heaven uttered it, and the Spirit echoed the words : " Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may " rest from their labours, and their works do " follow them."

SERMON XXVII.

THE TWO WORSHIPPERS.

S. LUKE XVIII. 10.

“Two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee and the other a publican.”

THESE few simple words, the opening of a parable most telling in its power, bring suddenly before us that great masterpiece of Jewish art and architecture, the Temple in the Holy City. Around this Temple all Jewish hearts clustered in reverent devotion. When at home they turned towards it as the Holy House wherein dwelt the Divine Presence and the Divine Glory; when in exile their spirits yearned after it as the object of their deepest regret, and the centre of all they held dear. It was adorned with no niggard hands kept tightly closed by the ugly spirit of modern stinginess; all that was rare, all that was beautiful, all that was costly—to the very utmost that

art could devise—all that fabulous wealth could purchase, was placed willingly upon and within its walls, in willing obedience and devotion to the Divine Architect, who was no other than the King of kings and Lord of lords. It was dedicated to Him with elaborate services and costly sacrifices; set apart henceforth as the holy place wherein the Almighty Father was willing to meet all contrite prodigals returned from their wanderings, to hear their prayers, and accept their praises; consecrated for ever to sacrifice and worship—the living witness to the all abiding Presence of the Almighty Jehovah.

The vast crowds that flocked to that wonderful Temple on each appointed festival or fast were divided into two great bodies, each with their distinctive marks; two men went up into the Temple to pray; the proud and unconverted worshipper standing insolently with his head erect in the presence of Divinity; and the lowly, contrite penitent, smiting upon his breast, scarce daring even wistfully to gaze towards the throne of mercy. All worshippers within God's Temple are ranged in two ranks, separate and distinct; the marks and characteristics of each clear and open to the Divine object of their worship: the

self-righteous with their souls all stained and impure, clothed in the filthy rags of human pride ; the conscious sinners, lowly in their penitence, and humble in their weakness, suing reverently for mercy.

As was that grand and stately Temple to the Jew, so is each Parish Church, simple or costly, to each individual Christian. It may be in some sequestered country spot, a plain and simple edifice, unadorned by works of art ; the worldly means of those who worship there may be powerless to embellish as their reverent hearts would wish, but the consecration of holy worship turns the plainest dwelling place into the House of God ; its dedication to Heaven fills it with the promised blessing of the Saviour's presence. God would have none other but a humble dwelling place on earth, provided that His poor toiling children can build Him no other house ; but among the rich and powerful the simple tabernacle is not enough ; the plain tent which sufficed for the wilderness will not do for the proud and wealthy city : accumulated wealth must pay its tribute in acknowledgment of its source ; the simple song beside the river or beneath the trees must give place to the nobler chant played by

more skilful hands, sung by more skilful voices; in a word, art, and learning, and wealth must all be brought within the Temple, must all place their offerings in reverent devotion before the altar. But the worshippers are still the same, both in the simple tabernacle and the costly temple; each individual's heart is plain and open before the eye of God. Two men go up into the Temple to pray, the one arrogant and unbending in human pride, the other meek and lowly, longing for the Saviour's mercy.

My brethren in Christ, how is it with us to-day who have come up into the Temple to pray? Is this Church to us what the Temple was to the God-fearing Jew, the object of our loving care, the place of our heartfelt worship, the altar whereon we dedicate the first-fruits of our wealth, or the freewill offerings of our poverty? Have we left without its walls all worldly thoughts, all ambitious projects, all turbulent passions: feeling and believing that its consecration and the promise of Christ usher us into the very presence of the Triune God.

Wonderful thought! True fulfilment of the gracious promise! "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in

“the midst of them.” This is the magic secret of all true prayer, of all sincere worship, of all acceptable offerings. We cannot assemble with any hope of the Divine presence in any other name than that of Jesus, with any other plea than that of Calvary’s Cross. Jesus Christ is the Christian’s pass-word that admits us within the ranks ; the Cross is the banner for each Christian soldier to grasp fast and firmly as the fight of faith is being fought to the end—as each faltering petition is presented in feeble language and trembling lips, the name of the Crucified gives to it an all-prevailing power, imparting to it virtue to cast behind it all that is frail and human, as it soars into the presence of the Divine Father. “Lord, teach us to pray,” was the unanimous cry of the Apostolic band as they bowed their heads before the Incarnate Redeemer. “Lord, teach us to pray,” is still the heartfelt petition of the Church militant on earth, worshipping often in loneliness, and sadness, and consciousness of sin, the now glorified Redeemer, exalted far above all principalities and powers, and clothed with majesty and honour ; unseen, indeed, but ever truly present where even two or three are gathered together in His name. It is

the realization by faith of that Divine presence that must fill us all with solemn awe, with lowly reverence, with heartfelt joy, as from Sabbath to Sabbath we join the great body of the faithful in the prayers and the praises of His Consecrated Temple, feeling with the faithful patriarch after his wonderful vision in the night, that "this is none other than the House of God, this is the gate of Heaven."

Surely, my brethren, one prevailing sin of many in the present day is want of reverence in the House of God. Many altogether failing to realize the certainty of the Divine presence, which is the secret of all acceptable worship. How often do we hear sneers as some amongst us persistently practise a reverent demeanour, bringing the body in unison with the spirit, to pay its tribute of devotion unto Him who will hereafter raise it from the dead? If it be true that God is specially here to meet us, is it reverent to stand in careless and listless attitude as we sing His praises, or to sit all unconcerned in the spirit of unbending pride, as we join in the confession of our numberless transgressions. Bear with me, my brethren, if in honest anxiety to tell you the truth, I say some things which seem to be meant specially

for not a few amongst us. Is it reverent habitually to enter this consecrated Church long after our worship has begun, thus losing much that ought to be both edifying and comforting to your own souls, and disturbing the devotions of those who would not lose one word of the Church's appointed service. How often are we disturbed at the very threshold of our worship, as by penitent confession we are preparing for the Absolution of the great High Priest, that we may be admitted, as forgiven members of His Church, to offer up our praises and thanksgivings. The Absolution must surely fall dull and meaningless upon the ears of those who have not poured forth their penitent confession, within whose breast is still borne the burden of their daily sins.

“Two men,” says the Divine Master;” “Two men went up into the Temple to pray.” Still, after the preaching and teaching of nigh two thousand years are the same two worshippers to be found within its walls: the one unworthy, clothed in the repelling garments of human pride, whose petitions are beaten back again, unheard and uncared for, beaten back again to the earth from which they spring; the other all

meeekness and lowliness, with reverent attitude of spirit and of body, conscious of his own unworthiness, and yet accounted worthy through the blood of the Lamb who offers his petitions in the golden censer.

Oh! who that has any knowledge of his own traitorous heart could stand with head erect in the presence of Jesus Christ, who was crucified for our sins, who trod all that lonely road from Bethlehem to Calvary to make our path easier and our struggles lighter; who, through the constant presence of our iniquities, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?

“God be merciful to me a sinner,” is the natural utterance of every contrite heart; the only one that can bring home to us the reality of the Saviour’s love and forgiveness; the only prayer that contains within itself the unfailing promise of a gracious answer which, as we leave this House of God and return to our own cherished homes, has the power to shed abroad in our hearts that peace which passeth all understanding. Reverent worship here is the discipline for a purer and heartier worship hereafter; this material Temple, as time rolls on must pass away; but there is another, not made with

hands, eternal in the Heavens, wherein the penitent heart, purified and ennobled, without spot or blemish, may worship for ever in the presence of God and the Lamb.

SERMON XXVIII.

THE EXILED BRIDE.

PSALM CXXXVII. 1. (Prayer Book Version.)

“By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Sion.”

THIS psalm brings forcibly before us the loneliness of exiled Judah as, far from the home of their love, they toiled among strangers in a strange land. Even at this distance of time, with feelings of pity that we meditate upon their altered lot, and behold them writhing beneath bondage their own sins had rendered necessary. They, to whom once had been dear the covenant worship of their Divine Head; they, whose presence once had been the presence of their God in that matchless temple, and the grandeur of Jewish psalmody rolling upwards from thousands of worshippers,—they had now to hush their voices as they whispered to each other of the vanished “joys of the past.” “Nothing,” says the learned Milman, “nothing could pre-

“a more striking contrast to their native country
“than the region to which the Hebrews were now
“transplanted. Instead of their irregular and
“picturesque mountain city, crowning its unequal
“heights, and looking down into its deep and
“precipitous ravines, through one of which a
“scanty stream wound along, they entered the
“vast, square, and level city of Babylon, occupy-
“ing both sides of the broad Euphrates. How
“different from the sunny cliffs of their own land,
“where the olive and the vine grew spontaneously,
“and the cool, shady, and secluded valleys, where
“they could always find shelter from the heat of
“the burning noon. No wonder, then, that in
“the pathetic words of their own hymn: ‘By the
“‘waters of Babylon they sat down and wept
“‘when they remembered thee, O Sion.’” And
with the memory of Sion, the city of their God,
doubtless there burst in upon their sorrowing
hearts and minds a flood of other memories,
stinging them bitterly as they sat beside the
rivers all penitent and bruised; the countless
warnings of the prophets treated as an idle tale;
corruption within the temple’s holy walls, and
spots upon the garments of their priests; the
table of stone, delivered to them by God Himself,

dishonoured and forgotten ; and the revelries and idolatries of Heathendom itself preferred and courted rather than a worship and a creed sent from Heaven, and celebrated in a temple of unparalleled beauty. Each individual exile had doubtless his own particular memory to sadden his heart, and render his bitter banishment more bitter still. There was the memory of that long siege—the days of famine and desolation and the sword—families and friends rudely torn asunder by an infuriated foe—fathers mourning over their murdered sons, and mothers over the children dying for want of food—till at last the cup of the Lord's fierce anger was poured out upon the city, and the day of its doom was come. There was the memory, too, of each sin^s that shut out the mercy of Heaven ; each neglect of holy duties ; each violation of sacred ties ; each desecration of consecrated vessels,—memories enough, indeed, to make them hang their harps upon the willows, the emblems of their tears. It were hard, indeed, bowed down thus by the crushing weight of the bitter present, and the memory of the sinful past, to raise their voices in the old strains of joyful melody ; all the old associations had vanished from their sight ; there was no shrine

upon which to place their offerings, save the temple of a Heathen god ; hundreds of familiar voices had been hushed for ever ; they felt they were beneath the bann of Heaven, outcasts for a time from the presence of their King, and enthusiastic praise were no fit accompaniment to the desolation of their spirit ; “How shall we “sing the Lord’s song in a strange land ?”

And as all this was going on, have we not a glimpse of the pitying love of Heaven willing, over and over again, to receive the outcasts home ? There was One above, slain before the foundations of the world, a sacrifice for all penitents, a pardoner of all contrite hearts. He was watching from the throne above the wandering, wayward sheep, straying so widely and sinning so deeply. Years afterwards, when clothed in our humanity, subject to our sorrows, and sighing with our burdens ; years afterwards, with the sight of Calvary full in view, the agonies of death already weighing upon His lowly spirit, in the midst of stern rebukes to Pharisaic pride, and the emptiness and worthlessness of all lip service unto God—His heart yearned over the city of His love as He beheld it beneath His feet in all its beauty, and He wept for Sion as in prophetic

vision He saw her sinking into ruin and desolation. He, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, had beheld, too, her exiled people mourning beside the rivers of the stranger, all melody hushed within their hearts; He knew that the day of His Father's mercy was fast fading away, and the night of His wrath once again about to close over them; and as He saw them thus fading from their former glory, losing their kingdom, and despising their birthright, he sighed over them as a father over his rebellious sons, whom he cannot altogether banish from the love of His heart. "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, "thou that killest the prophets, and stonest "them that are sent unto thee, how often would "I have gathered thy children together, even as "a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, "and ye would not."

It had done no good to write all this down in a book whose inspiration has been proved in blood, and saved from destruction by the death of thousands, were there not contained in it a lesson for all generations to come. What profits it to meditate over the fall of kingdoms and nations once prosperous and glorious, now without a nationality, known but by name in the

pages of history? Why should we dwell upon that sad picture of Israel's outcast sons, sighing in their lonely exile, their hearts too sad and their spirits too broken to sing one song of Zion they fondly remembered? We, as Englishmen, may glory in a noble past and happy present, looking forward in confidence to peace and prosperity for ages to come. Did Israel ever dream in the days of her mighty kings and boundless conquests that her grandeur should pass away like a thing of nought, almost forgotten in the bitterness of humiliation? Did Babylon, the mighty, ever dream, as the exiles sat in loneliness by her rivers, and her children asked them for melody—did she ever dream that her name should be wiped out from among the nations; the ruins of her temple and her palaces a study for the curious and the learned? And to come nearer to our own time—to point to a fact pregnant with sad lessons, and warnings not with safety to be disregarded—did France ever dream a short time since, in the height of prosperity and in the pride of many a conquest, that her day of victory had passed away; that her arms were not invincible; that the proudest cities of the Empire would be laid in ruins, while her own sons and

daughters should fall so miserably low as to work mischief which centuries can scarcely remedy, to destroy the produce of art which millions can never restore, and to give to the world the sad spectacle of morality and religion trampled under foot, and every right of humanity violated and despised?

These things are not taken, by the Christian at least, as events in the great circle of time going round and round, regulated by no guiding hand, the result of no providential power. The creed of the Christian is to be found in the revelation of Jesus Christ and His stedfast Apostles, who partially draw aside the veil between Heaven and earth, and disclose the Omnipotent hand that rules the Universe. In the dealings of Jehovah with His chosen race, we have an unmistakeable assertion that the eyes of our Heavenly Father are on the evil and the good; that he knows and regulates the steps which lead on to prosperity and ruin. In the history of the nations which have risen to a pinnacle of greatness and power, and then sunk gradually lower and lower—where their records are fully preserved—it is easy to trace the steps by which they descended; some individual

violating the laws of his race, then another and another, till the plague spot spread from one to thousands. The degradation of the grandeur and purity of manhood leads swiftly to forgetfulness of the Godhead, and men live as if the present were the sum and substance of their existence, neither hoping for the life, nor fearing the death to come.

We cannot look round upon this thickly populated land without fearing for the future of a people many of whom have openly cast aside the honoured and well-proved creeds of antiquity, and are seeking to cut loose the bonds that bind them to the Church of God.

Does it not behove every individual member of the Church of England, threatened on one side as she is by legislators not altogether Godly, on the other by a great crowd of men longing to be loosed from all religious restraint—does it not behove each individual member to come to the rescue with all the weapons of the Christian armour, to stand up more than ever for the heirlooms that we prize. We want more reverence in the public service that we offer to the King of kings ; we want more loving obedience to the Saviour's dying command that we should remember Him at His altar.

Once more, my brethren, and in conclusion, let me take you back to the sad picture of exiled Judah beside the waters of Babylon. The pathos of their sorrowful strain looks far beyond their exile and captivity, and sets before God the longing of His Church for the Paradise we have lost. The faithful servants of the Lord are now in bondage to the mystical Babylon of the world, that is ever increasing the burdens and sorrows of struggling souls. The hearts of all true faithful followers of the Cross are often heavy now; their harps are hung upon the willows; their voices and their melody are hushed; they feel like strangers and pilgrims in a strange land, ever sighing as they toil for the Zion of their rest. And the eye glistens and the pulse quickens at the thought of a coming restoration, when the pure joyful song of Zion shall awaken the echoes of the Heavenly Temple; there shall be harpers harping with their harps as they worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; no shade of sorrow shall fall upon their joyous melody; no earthly discord mar the harmony of their Heaven.

SERMON XXIX.

THE POWER OF LOVE.

S. JOHN XIII. 34.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another,”

THESE words contain the very key-note of Christianity; the golden chain, bound about the feet of Jesus, linking our earth to the Heaven above it; proclaimed upon the eve of departure, they are the Master's legacy bequeathing the badge of discipleship, the inscription on the Christian's banner.

Jesus Christ was standing between the Old Covenant and the New; slowly fading away was the grandeur of the Jewish ritual; Sinai was yielding unto Calvary, which, albeit steeped in blood, was crowned with mercy; all sacrifices were gathering together in one as our Paschal Lamb was about to be offered; in unison with the tread of the Roman army to destroy the

material city, came the steps of invisible legions to the moral rescue; as Jerusalem was battered into ruins there arose a heavenly city, fairer in beauty, indestructible, immortal, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. Doubtless before the All-seeing Eye passed, one by one, the systems of philosophy invented and developed by the human brain; some approaching closely to the threshold of Christian morality; some lying low in the darkness of Paganism; all without the power to renovate corrupted humanity, or to point the soul upwards to its origin and destiny. As a sigh burst from His pitying heart, when, with gaze upturned to His Father's house, the home of His glory, He opened the ears that were deaf, and loosed the tongue that was tied; so now a review of the world's history, falling every day, and sinning every hour, brought before His mind the hollowness of all that the human brain could invent to lead the creature heavenward to the Creator; He could see the flaw in the teaching of all the so-called wise, in the creeds and codes of multiplied sects and societies. He was about to send forth a little band, to grow, as the years

rolled on, into an army, to renovate the earth ; not an army with chariots and horsemen and all the pomp of human warfare devastating in carnage and desolation, but one whose weapons were invisible, the gift of the King of kings and Lord of lords, clothed in gentleness, and winning by the eloquence breathed silently within the soul by the power of the Spirit, who should imprint the token of mutual love upon the self-denying life of each enlisted soldier, and “by this” declared the Founder and the Finisher ; “by this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Oh ! say, was it a portion of His bitter agony, mingled with the burning tears of Gethsemane, and the loneliness of His dying hour, that the future was before the mind of Him whose heart was ever deeply touched by His brethren’s sins and sorrows ? The contemplation of the matchless sufferings of His own immediate followers, His own dear martyrs, enshrined for ever in the purest pages of the Church’s history ; their lives of deprivation, and deaths of agony, might not, could not, have wrung His soul like the backslidings and treachery of succeeding years. He knew He had the power to keep His comforting

promise—to walk beside them and take their faithful hands in His as they were led to death; that they should hear the sound of His tender voice in the loneliness of the prison cell; that hereafter, when earth and all its bitterness had been shaken from off their feet, there were crowns of endless glory to encircle their brow.

But what of the grave, grave sins of His own blood-bought Church, removing His own mark from her dishonoured brow, and stamping there the image of the world! See how she forgot Him century after century, staining more deeply every hour the Apostolic commission entrusted to her keeping. Her Bishops began to claim as their heritage a kingdom of this world which the Divine Head had once and for ever refused, and to cast in their lot with the pomp and glory and dissipation of earthly monarchs; her priests began to sell the forgiveness of sins, which money could never buy, nor human power alone ever bestow; they sought for themselves an universal supremacy over the human mind—altogether forgetting the origin and source of their power; they tried to force men and women and children into compliance with a Creed exaggerated and distorted by ignorant imagina-

tion—force them by tortures which were marvels of ingenious cruelty, racking the human frame with agony beyond endurance, sometimes compelling the confession of the lip as the weary and exhausted soul took its flight to the land beyond the grave. And all this, too, in the name of her dishonoured Bridegroom; this was the promulgation of the gospel of mercy, of reconciliation, of tenderness, of truth! Surely the disciples had lost their badge, the soldiers their banner. Had they listened with the ear of faith they might have caught the echoes of their Founder's voice speaking on the eve of His departure, "by this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Not difficult, indeed, would it be to summon before the mind the fascinating picture of the world governed by the law of mutual love and forbearance; nation bound unto nation by the silken cords of Christian fellowship, stronger than all the binding of craftily worded treaties and the stgnatures of subtle statesmen. Are wars no judgment for the violated precept, scourges for the broken law? Nations plunged into mourning, sighing over the graves of their honoured dead; provinces torn away by the hand

of might, and citizens expelled from the land of their birth and inheritance, or compelled to bow beneath the power of the stranger; cities converted into ruins, and fair vineyards and blooming gardens into miserable deserts; proud spirits sighing beneath the sting of bitter humiliation, paying heavy tribute, wrung out of the earth by the sweat of the brow; the treasures of art committed to the flames, and the dearest shrines desecrated by the tread of the victor's army;—surely no power can ward off these bitter penalties save the badge of Christian discipleship, the influence of Christian love turning the sword into the ploughshare, and the spear into the pruning-hook, stamping out for ever all envy, hatred, and malice, masters in the school in which the nations all learn war.

We hear much in these days of the Union of Christendom; the merging of all Creeds into one; the communion of churches now separated by the wording of a dogma, or the form of a worship professedly offered to the same God through the same Mediator! Who cannot join in the prayer from the inmost heart for the coming of that foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven, that He, our Divine Head, may so knit

together in one all the different members of His mystical body, that all the millions of souls now seeking rest through diverse paths, may meet in the great high road at the end of which stands the Father's house of many mansions ; that light enough may be sent on earth to the struggling souls now in partial darkness, that the one true Church may gather in all men living, like the Ark of old as it floated on the waters ; that all nations and people may be joined together in the heaven-sent harmony of the Christian brotherhood, recognised as disciples of the pattern of all love, in the fervent charity that binds them to each other ?

And still more easily realized is the picture of a small community, each member of which shall have stamped upon his brow and manifested in his life the badge and mark of Christian discipleship. Take some small section of human society and mark how, in the struggle for worldly prosperity, man fights against man for the mastery ! Worshipers in the same temple, suppliants at the same altar, professors of the same Creeds roused into irritation in the great conflict of life, giving full and free flow to the burst of passion and the suggestions of envy, wounding where

they have the power to heal, stinging where they have the power to soothe! Well did the Apostles give the palm to Christian charity, which is Christian love; it is the embodiment of all virtue, the incentive of every good deed; in its purity and self-sacrifice it has a magic power, covering a multitude of sins, and soothing a multitude of sorrows; in every temptation to biting sarcasm it waves before the distorted vision the olive branch of peace, and preaches forbearance; to hearts, for the moment torn asunder by a tumult of passion, bearing down like a raging torrent, it whispers forgiveness and reunion; it sends pitying hearts to the bedside of the sick, to soothe the pillow for the aching heads; it stands by the grave as the dead are lowered to their last earthly resting place, and clasps the hands of the mourner in Christlike sympathy; it sends forth heroes far from their kith and kin to win the Heathen to the fellowship which is the essence and comfort of their own life; it is the only realization of the Christian ideal on earth, and promises that unity and peace which is hereafter in the presence of the Lamb to be the Christian's Heaven. And yet with all its tenderness and gentleness it inspires within the heart the courage of the

bravest warrior, all the endurance of the martyr in the flames ; it is no craven spirit upon which has breathed in all its heavenly inspiration the power with which the Saviour loved His brethren in the flesh ; it gives us the bravery to set aside all the heartless distinctions which human pride has reared for our worship, and to recognize in all men brothers claiming our sympathy and demanding our help ; it pierces beneath the ravages which crime and poverty have wrought, and sees, amongst the ruins, the remnants still of the image of our Creator, longing to restore cold hearts to living warmth, the dissolute to purity, wanderers to their home, and to stamp upon their brows its own sign and seal, by which all men shall know they are the disciples of Christ, who died for souls.

With its mystic power, then, to drive before us half the ills of our chequered life, to banish many a heart burn, to restore many a lost friend, to heal many a wounded spirit, and to soothe us in many a weary hour, who would not seek for it, cultivate it, cherish it as one of Heaven's loveliest gifts? It comes not into the full bloom of its beauty suddenly by a single effort ; it deepens as the years roll on, and the spirit kindles into

brighter life as it nears its everlasting home. Surely we gain it best and keep it brightest by the ever-present realization that God, who is love, dwells within the human heart ; to realize that our Heavenly Father is the very essence and perfection of this love that we long for, and in this spirit to pray for it through Christ, this is the striving to which is pledged the promise of its abundant gift.

SERMON XXX.

THE LIFE-LONG LABOUR.

PHILIPPIANS II. part of v. 12.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

THE Apostle Paul, addressing his converts in terms of warm affection, praises them for their willing obedience to the Gospel which he taught while amongst them in the flesh, and for the devotion with which they hallowed his memory, and at the same time points out that they have something to do which depends not on any visible presence, but on faith in Him who is in Heaven, at the right hand of the Father. The work that he had been able to accomplish amongst them, was but the sowing of seed, which, according to the soil, might bring forth a harvest of joy, and which might wither and die, if left uncultivated and uncared for. They had but just entered on the first stage of a long

battle might go against them, they might
the victory ; they had but entered the vi
in the morning ; they must work on t
shadows of the evening gathered around
and their Lord should come with His
The work which he lays thus before them
that must be taken up with all the enthus
living faith, by each individual member
infant Church.

Much as the Apostle's loving spirit
yearn for them, and offer up prayers fo
safety before the throne of their common F
the actual work for them he could not
actual way for them he could not tree
battle for them he could not fight. The
themselves labour in the vineyard if they
have the reward of the Master, they mu

resumed again when grief saddened the heart and took their thoughts from earth. Impulses belong to humanity; but scarcely unto grace, the grace of Christ. There are and have been scores of men whose blood has tingled at a tale of mean oppression, whose hearts have been touched and tears forced from their eyes at the sight of the suffering of their fellow men. There are many characters that seem to us lovely and loveable, although they have as yet been untouched by the grace of Christ—men who do good because it pleases their warm hearts, who possess an enthusiasm which nature has given them, who have gentleness and kindness in their very blood. How often have we seen men like this, yielding ever unto impulse, make a miserable shipwreck of their lives, and die without having accomplished any one work worthy of their manhood. They have had no steady purpose before their eyes, no bright glittering light which they could see through all the mists that might arise, through their daily falls into sin, their innumerable tributes to the god of the world, the mammon that kills. Impulse has become fainter and the blood has become cooler, as the hair has grown gray, and when they, perhaps,

were slipping into the grave, they have had to go through the discipline of infants, having utterly lost and dishonoured the good seed that, without one single doubt, was assuredly sown in their hearts at the font of baptism, the entrance to the Church of Christ. It is not by the promptings of all the kindness and generosity of the kindest heart by nature, that the great work of our lives can either be begun or completed. All the warmth and the beauty that nature can give must be purified and deepened and consecrated by the grace of Christ, and then we shall be able to obey the injunction of the Apostle of the Gentiles, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

We may here stay for one moment to ask what that salvation is that is coming nearer and nearer as we work and pray. We see it now, faintly in the dim distance, the fulfilment of a promise that cannot fail : we hear it in the inspired songs and writings of holy men of old, who have prophesied and gone to their rest. The sure and certain hope of it, strong and never dying reliance on the word that has been pledged to it, have given power to the martyr to pass through the flames. Our sins that meet us day

and night and torment the spirit that is longing and striving to be holier, to the home of our salvation they cannot come. The sorrow and disappointment that now cast their shadow upon every happy moment, in the day of our salvation shall be unknown. The doubts that disturb, the contradictions that perplex the intellect seeking after light, into the kingdom prepared for us cannot enter. The mourner, who in the days of our earthly pilgrimage, has to stand by while "dust is cast upon dust and ashes upon ashes," in the days of our salvation will see the grave empty and death vanquished for ever. Families and friends now often torn asunder are to be re-united, the corruptible shall put on incorruption, the mortal immortality. There will be no more bitter struggles after holiness, no more bitter tears as we fall from the Faith. Our vile bodies will be changed, made after the pattern of the glorious body of Christ, and all fear and trembling which now must attend us as we work will be turned into confidence and trust in the three Persons of the one God, whose peace and blessing, passing all understanding, shall be ours for ever.

To this end and for this purpose we are to

toil unceasingly all through the day of our life, until the night of the grave close over our heads, and we join the spirits that are waiting for the trumpet to sound, and the dead to rise.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” I cannot tell where some have learnt what they are pleased to call their Christian assurance, by which they profess to have a passport to heaven, which they can never lose. They confess indeed that they have somewhat of their mortality left to them—they may sin, but they must be forgiven: they may fall, but they must rise again. Contrasted with their confidence comes before us the Apostle’s fear and the Apostle’s trembling—compared to his faith, theirs is like the flame of a candle to the noon-day sun; compared to his work, theirs is as one grain of sand to the thousands that line the shore. His self-denial seems to us perfect, his patience in persecution inimitable, his love proof against all time and misfortune. And yet he declares unto us, learned, noble, faithful, loving, brave as he was, he declares unto us that after all it was possible for him to be a castaway.

We must be anxious and careful, lest our repeated falls into sin and the coldness of our

repentance should grieve the spirit of God, and banish Him from His temple in our hearts ; we must tremble lest familiarity with the truths that God has given to us in His word cause us to value lightly the things into which the angels desire to look. We must fear lest the ardour and warmth of our youth die away as we grow older, and we forsake, unworthily, our first love. We must tremble lest the oftener we see our brethren laid beneath the earth, we grow too familiar with the grave, and forget that it is the boundary line between the visible and the invisible ; that in it there is neither work, nor knowledge, nor device, nor wisdom, and that to it we are going. We must fear, lest, having started fairly and favourably on the road leading homewards, we turn aside into a by-way, and lose ourselves in the wilderness far from God ; we must tremble lest in the time of our greatest weakness Satan tempt us to deny our Master, and we die ere we have the power to confess Him again. It is in this spirit, feeling our way, distrusting ourselves, that we are to complete the work which is begun, that is to end in salvation, peace in the presence of our Father.

Truly did Christ declare "that the children

“of this world are, in their generation, wiser than “the children of light.” See how the votaries of the world, the worshippers at the golden altar of Mammon, rise early and late take rest to gather together the treasures of earth which the moth and the rust are to corrupt and thieves are to steal. They work out their plan for advancement and gain, with fear lest they may lose in the speculation ; with trembling lest they may fail in the end. Weary days and sleepless nights they willingly pass through that they may gain the gold they cherish, and satisfy the craving of a heart loyal to a god that must betray, faithful to a master that is sure to punish. In their zeal, in their wisdom, in their patience, their energy, they are an example and reproach to the members of the Christian Church. We profess, at least, to have a treasure : so do they. Their treasure is this world and all they can gain in it, and for this they labour like men, with fire and energy worthy of a better cause. The treasure we profess to hold dearer than life itself, costlier than all earthly gold, more precious far than ought beside, is Christ, our Salvation, our hope of glory, our Rock that cannot be moved. And yet for Him our work is light, and our labour is

scanty : the far off vision of a home in heaven, loses its brightness in the dulness of our eyes, and the thousand voices that are calling us onward are dim and indistinct, for we will not strive to hear and to obey.

As our souls grow faint in the labour of life, and our energy is flagging, let us remember that we cannot rest upon earth. The voice of the Apostle speaks of a task that is life-long, and an end that is worth toiling for. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

SERMON XXXI.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE CROSS.

ST. MATTHEW XXVI. 22.

“And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say, Lord, is it I?”

THESE words introduce us at once into the midst of that wonderful scene, the night before the crucifixion. Ever memorable and holy in the annals of the Christian Church, around it there cluster a multitude of sacred memories, which are held most dear by the followers of Jesus Christ.

In that upper room, on that last eventful night, were assembled the foundation and corner stone of the Catholic Church, upon which hereafter was to be reared an immutable and spiritual building, against which the gates of hell can never prevail. No, never! for the promise is from the lips of One who is omnipotent and can never lie: there may, as time rolls on, be traitors

within, and powerful foes without; the clouds of persecution may deepen and darken, and seem for a time to hide the brightness of the Father's face: the influence and tyranny of hostile bodies, clothed with all the majesty of human law, may misinterpret doctrines, and defile the inner shrine by unseemly meddling in things Divine: but all this is but part of a purifying discipline: it is the burden to be borne, that each individual soul may be rendered worthy of the Lamb that was slain: "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," is the comforting assurance that the Bride, the Church, shall at last be freed from all that now hinders her mission, and be joined in visible and unchangeable union with her Lord.

I have said that the words of my text introduce us at once into the midst of a wonderful scene, ever memorable in the annals of the Christian Church. In it there stands out prominently that act of loving and humble devotion, a lesson to the Church in all the ages that were to follow, "Though He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came from God and was going to God, He arose from supper, and taking a towel

“girded Himself, and after He had poured water
“into a basin He began to wash His disciples’
“feet, and to wipe them with a towel where-
“with He was girded.”

Here was an act pregnant with holy lessons, preaching for ever the gospel of humility and self-denial, a dart hurled with truest aim at the spirit of human pride and self-exaltation, with which the Spirit of Christ can never dwell ; then must have arisen before the astonished Apostles the many occasions upon which thoughts of rank and precedence had disturbed the harmony of their brotherhood ; the petty squabbles in the world they must often have witnessed, squabbles for the chief places and posts of worldly honour ; and a new light must have burst upon their souls as they beheld their Lord and Master whom they believed to be Divine, stooping to the lowly act of an Eastern slave. One can readily sympathize with the impetuous Peter as he beheld this absolute reversal of social customs ; it was but a misapprehension of the real dignity of our manhood which made him ardently exclaim, “Lord, Thou shalt never wash my feet.” “Thou, “the Son of God, the King of Israel, who hast “the words of eternal life—Thou, whose feet

“oriental kings should anoint with their costliest ointment, and penitents bathe in precious tears—*Thou* shalt never wash my feet.”

But stranger far than this momentary misapprehension of St. Peter, which was soon cleared away by the condescending teaching of our Lord, stranger far was the silent presence of one over whose whole being hung a cloud of moral and spiritual iniquity, which no light or love had the power to dispel. Yes; Judas, the betrayer, silently accepted this act of devotion with a heart still callous, and a will still bent on the betrayal of his benefactor. “O! strange unfathomable depth of human infatuation and ingratitude: that traitor, with all the black and accursed treachery in his false heart, had felt the touch of those kind and gentle hands, had been refreshed by the cleansing water, had seen the sacred head bent over his feet; but for him there had been no purification; the spirit of evil had not fled at the sound of that gentle voice, nor the leprosy of his heart been healed by that miracle-producing touch.”

And yet I cannot doubt but that even now there was time—even now, ere the door was finally closed by the last act of the dreadful

tragedy, he might have listened to the thousand voices that were calling him far away from his deed of blood. Christ surely was willing, but he would not; the words of that heart throbbing with pity, spoken over the fallen city, were still applicable to him: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, "thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them "that are sent unto thee, how often would I "have gathered thy children together, as a hen "gathereth her chickens under her wings, and "ye would not." Surely if anything could have driven him from his self-destroying purpose: if anything could have moved his hardened and still hardening heart, it was that act of lowliness and meekness—the washing of a would-be traitor's feet with the waters of purification.

Oh! who can tell the bitter pain, of that human heart as *one* soul was thus intent upon taking the final leap, which must for ever place the "great gulph" between him and the souls of the just; "the presence of that black iniquity moved the heart of Jesus to its inmost depths, and wrung from Him His agony of yet plainer prediction: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that "*one of you shall betray me.*"

"*One of you shall betray me,*" one of Mine

own familiar friends, the sharer of our common blessings, a fellow-labourer in the vineyard, one who has preached and worked in My name, and in My name cast out devils, one of the chosen twelve shall betray Me.

This prediction was the discordant note that broke up the harmony of that sacred meal ; the apostles doubtless had anticipated a holy enjoyment of the appointed Passover with the Master that they loved ; the words here and there that had fallen from the lips of Jesus had, as yet, but awakened a presentiment of coming evil, some indefinite feeling and dread of approaching suffering and death ; but here was a distinct announcement that the mischief was to begin within their own ranks : that the very citadel had been assaulted and robbed by the powers of darkness.

The keenest apprehensions, must have been awakened in the heart of each one of the still faithful eleven ; memory must have summoned before them all the coldness of their love, all the slowness of their faith, all the want of nobility and self-sacrifice of the past three years of their discipleship : “ every evil thought they ever thought, and every evil word they ever said, and

“every evil thing that they ever did” must have stood before them in terrible array, and made their consciences afraid. The possibility to each one that he might be the accursed traitor must have caused their cheeks to pale and their lips to tremble: “they were exceeding sorrowful, and “began everyone of them to say unto Him, Lord, “is it I?”

It is not my purpose now to dwell further upon the stirring incidents of that last night. We may pass now from the upper room in the Holy City to our own homes and places of worship; from the infant days of the Christian Church to the days of its greater growth and multiplied numbers: that little band has swollen into a mighty multitude, and the simple ritual and ceremonial of the upper room has developed into the great and glorious system of worship of the militant Church of the Crucified. Especially here in England are we wont to boast of a Faith freed from the distortions of superstition, of mysteries unpolled by the inventions of the human mind.

What if amongst the multitudes enlisted in the ranks of the visible fold there should be some, concerning whom the omniscience of God can

declare, that they are betraying the Lord who died for their sakes ! Alas ! it is but too possible, as the Apostle Paul has written for our warning, it is but too possible to crucify the Son of God afresh, and to put Him to an open shame ; since the days of Judas there have been traitors enough who have forgotten their baptismal vows and disgraced the banner beneath which they have been sworn to fight ; they have forsaken their first love, and forgotten the lowly teaching of Him who washed His disciples' feet : remaining outwardly in the number of the chosen, while their hearts within have been in covenant with other masters, in the secret service of His foes.

Surely now, it behoves us all as the possibility arises before our minds that we *may* be traitors to Him who has loved us with a love right royal in all its freeness and its fulness, it behoves us all in sorrow to ask with the disciples of old, "*Lord, is it I ?*" Is it I, who by my purposeless life, and the coldness of my love, am crucifying Thee afresh, and putting Thee to an open shame ? Truly the world of the nineteenth century has a special power to lead us away from the self-denying, cross-bearing path the lowly Saviour trod ; how many there are in the ranks of fashion

passing away the hours like the butterfly, as it hastens from flower to flower, sipping each pleasure as it is presented to their lips, and for ever postponing the more serious thoughts of the Christian race and struggle.

There are men and women enough with good impulses and good abilities whose morality indeed none can condemn ; hesitating, for ever hesitating to step boldly into the vineyard of the Lord, and toil on until the evening. It is often nothing but a careless and listless resignation to the power of society's laws and customs—the world's easily flowing stream bears them along—there is the ready-made routine stamped with the stamp of rank and fashion, which has for them a fascination not easily dispelled—a fascination which blinds the eye and deadens the life of the soul, presenting as the object of the heart's best homage a mocking delusion, before which multitudes bow the head and bend the knee.

God alone knows the mighty mass of wasted energy that bears no good fruit as the year rolls by ; the mighty mass of good abilities unconsecrated by the Spirit of Holiness, unemployed in the ceaseless work of the world's renovation :

powers of the human mind and the human body, which, if employed under the shadow of the Cross of Jesus, might visibly lessen the sicknesses of the flesh and the spirit, and prepare a bountiful harvest for the coming of the Lord.

“*Lord, is it I?*” is the cry of each penitent, sorrow-stricken disciple. Is it I who am thus wasting my energy and squandering my talents in a life *without a purpose*: a purpose upon which God and the holy angels may smile in loving approbation? Teach me to examine my heart, and put my finger on the plague spot; give me the devotion, self-sacrifice, faith and courage of the true disciple of Thy cross, that I may never, *like Judas*, leave Thy holy presence and go out into the night.

SERMON XXXII.

THE DANGER OF THE WORLD'S APPROBATION.

S. LUKE, VI. 26.

“Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

THESE words contain a startling warning, over which it is well sometimes to ponder; they suggest to us a whole legion of enemies, insinuating and seductive, beguiling human souls along the easy comfortable path that can never lead to peace. As the ocean is often strewed with broken spars and shattered masts, and the relics of the dead: so can history present to us many and many a bright spirit lured to his ruin; enticed by the sparkle in the wine, and the false glitter in the feast of worldly pleasure; allured by the comforting assurances of short-sighted friends and the grateful incense of popular approbation; enticed to sleep when he should be working, and to sing when he should be

watching and praying, until the last barrier has been passed, the last warning neglected, the last signal unheeded, and he has perished in the storm. Many a human character starting fair and bravely in the struggle, kindling enthusiastic pride in a parent's heart in anticipation of coming honour, has gone well through the first heat of the battle, till the incense of popular applause has thrown a mist over his eyes and he has fallen before the foe. Strong energetic bodies have faded beneath the power of worldly ease : strong energetic minds have been enervated by thoughtless inactivity ; pure guileless hearts have been sullied and debased by unmanly motives and ignoble deeds, and this, step by step, as the insinuating world has crept within the citadel, and expelled by degrees all the exalted aspirations of a noble manhood, Heaven fading in the distance as the earth absorbed more and more the vision of the sinking soul. Then comes the weeping and the wailing as memory scans in irony the barren waste that lies along the past ; the bitterness of sharp remorse and unavailing tears ! Oh ! for a few more years of life in which to live a champion of purity and honour ; to cast back indignantly into the world's own

face, the soulless words of flattery and invitation to unholy pleasure; to say a few more prayers and try to obliterate the past by lowly and contrite penitence! But how many awake to the spirit's life as they feel the coming of the body's death: slipping away into eternity just as they have begun to feel the preciousness of their misspent time! There is nothing for it but seeking and praying for the real personal friendship of Jesus Christ. "If He be God all the limitations of space and matter and time must vanish before Him." His lowly dwelling place may be the heart of each child of tenderest age, striving faintly to grasp the reality of a Saviour, born in a manger and dying on the Cross. He may dwell too in the heart of each youth just starting in the struggle, just commencing to gird on his armour for the conflict; in the heart too of each worn and weather beaten soldier, retiring from the battle, weary with the ceaseless toil and heat of the day. A vague idea of some invisible power willing and able to shield us from the penalty of sin; a crude notion of some supernatural spirit breathing gently into the human soul and whispering all that is beautiful and true; this will not suffice; we must grasp the

personality of Jesus Christ : be drawn to Him as the friend of all friends, and the brother of all brothers : clasp to our hearts the reality of that Divine face stamped with the humanity He has exalted ; the brow once wet with bloody sweat forced out by the bitterest agony ; the torn hands and feet and lacerated side ; the image of perfect man once marred and spoiled by a multitude of sorrows, now exalted far beyond all principalities and powers, clothed in the beauty of immortality. And yet in all the grandeur of glorified humanity there can never be crushed out one atom of the loving sympathy that burst forth in a thousand visible deeds long ago of healing and forgiveness : still in the realization of His personality there comes in all tenderness, charity, forbearance ; the manhood exalted unto God, neither lost nor absorbed, but distinct in the unity of one person, is the kindest, most comforting guarantee of His unchangeable fellow feeling with all His struggling brethren, as they sigh beneath their weight of sorrow, or shrink from temptation's seducing voice. The earnest realization of His universal presence in the human heart, the reverent clasping of His pierced hands, the loving nearness of His wounded side,

the receiving of Him wholly and solely ; these are the only conditions upon which we can ever hope to obtain a victory as the world marches up to undermine and corrupt, the only conditions upon which we can hope to withstand the influence of the world's enticing flattery, when all men shall speak well of us, as the fathers spoke of the prophets that were false.

Surely our Blessed Lord spoke in no exaggerated language of the imaginary evil of worldly popularity conjured up in the brain of some half blind enthusiast. His were not the words of a visionary, magnifying the difficulties of our common journey, putting fears and distrust into the human heart needing so sorely all the courage and fortitude of the bravest of the brave. If we are citizens of another country, enrolled for ever through our beloved and exalted head, as inhabitants of the Heavenly Jerusalem : if we, through the eye of faith, can throw our gaze forward in earnest rapture to the time of the second coming, longing for the bridal day, when the Church shall be happy in everlasting union with her Lord : is it possible that all the hosts who surround us, caring little for the Lamb who was led to the slaughter : denying the Godhead of the **Master**

we serve ; mocking us as we pray to Heaven ; comparing our petitions to the wild cry of some wounded animal complaining into space ; looking upon all creeds as equally the inventions of the human brain to satisfy the native superstition of the human mind ; is it possible that all these shall speak well of us, as the fathers spoke of the prophets that were false ? Voices seem to fall upon the ear, coming over the lapse of ages from the tombs of the martyrs : every century since the Cross stood upon Calvary with its bleeding burden—every century has had enrolled upon its annals the names of bold and dauntless spirits persecuted and tortured in defence of the truth. Behold them in the first struggle for the mastery, as Christianity and paganism came face to face,—the one to endure with the long-suffering of her Lord, the other to persecute to the death. Behold them, of all ages and sizes and stations, suffering beneath the tyrant's power, all the venom of lying tongues, all the contrivances of cultivated cruelty.

The annals of the Church's infancy were written in the blood of her martyrs. Boys in the weakness of their boyhood, virgins in the tenderness of their young womanhood, old men

and women, with failing strength and whitened hair, bishops and priests and deacons, all go to swell the ghastly list doomed by the enmity of an unbelieving world. They might have lived on, careless and contented, in the smile of a fickle people ; they might have floated leisurely upon the tide, regardless of the ocean of ruin into which they were hastening : but the messengers of Heaven, the pioneers of the Cross of Christ startled them by the revelation of the miseries and joys of a world hereafter, and melted their world-bound hearts by the story of our Master's mournful life, as He bore our wearying burdens, and died in agony ; and thus aroused from cold indifference, and melted into loving penitence, they chose the suffering of the body that their souls might rest in peace. All the woes that the world can inflict, disgrace, torture, poverty, loneliness, exile, death, are better than yielding oneself up to follow in the steps of the godless multitudes, who in return will speak well of their easy-going companions, as the fathers spoke of the prophets who were false.

And here there arises before the mind the vivid picture drawn in Sacred History, when the ten tribes were hushed into spiritual silence:

no voice of praise echoed through the courts of a dedicated temple, no odour of sacrifice, no incense with prayer. A wicked king had sanctioned the dethronement of Jehovah from the hearts of his subjects, and the false prophets became the favourites of a fickle people, who were ready to fawn and to flatter all preachers and prophets and teachers, who could whisper to them peace as they worshipped the flesh and bowed before the idols of their choice. Was the dauntless Elijah popular as he stood almost alone the champion of honour and of truth? The prophets of Baal and Ashtaroth, calling upon gods who perchance were asleep, trimming to popular prejudices and smiling upon sensuality and riotous living: these were the darlings of the people, the heroes of the hour, the priests and keepers of the souls of their flock, till Heaven destroyed the altars and the priests together, and purged for a time the land whose inhabitants were ever prone to forsake and dishonour their first love. Never can there be a greater curse to any land than when, one by one, the dauntless spirits fade away, who have the courage of true and honourable manhood, daring to speak out boldly as they behold the multitudes rushing into moral and

spiritual degradation, the courage to brave the cold and heartless sneer in defence of the incontrovertible truths sent in mercy from Heaven to the struggling earth. What matter though the votaries of the world meet them with mockery and smile at their zeal : what matter though envenomed tongues run fast and free in depreciation and slander : the flattering breath of a fickle crowd, paying hollow compliments and singing unmeant praises, is no sign that we are toiling onward in the path of duty, for Christ Himself, knowing full well all the precipices upon the brink of which humanity can stand, proclaims loudly that we are not safe when all men speak well of us, for so did the fathers to the prophets who were false.

Not that He would take from us one single blessing that could really help us and cheer us as we fight on to our home. He would not shut us out from the sympathy of friendship, nor have us run from the world to the solitary cloister. The kind approving words of those who really love us, the approbation of real friends who are toiling on beside us, the kindling glow in the eye of a sworn comrade, as we gain some victory and rise unsullied from some insinuating

temptation : these are not among the curses but the blessings of this transitory life, sent to strengthen and encourage in the fight. These come from the sacred few within the inner circle, the heart friends of the Christian, longing with him for a better country : feeling with him, as the tears of lowly penitence fall thick and fast for every violation of his Master's law, zealous with him for the honour of his crucified Master, proud with him in his enlistment in the rank of the army of which Jesus Christ is the Captain. While we rejoice in the loveliness and beauty of kindred hearts drawn to each other in the bond of Christian fellowship, sorrowing together over a multitude of sins, rejoicing together over victories won now and then by the Master's Heaven-sent power ; while we bless God for this, we must take the warning from those holy lips, we must shut our ears to the worthless and seducing flattery of an easy-going and pleasure seeking world. Though the music be sweet, pleasing the ear of flesh with the beauty of its harmony, though the wine and the mirth tempt us to the feast, though our brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers add their tribute to the intoxicating incense, yet must we prayerfully

remember the words of our Saviour's warning,
"Woe unto you when all men shall speak well
of you! for so did their fathers to the false
prophets."

THE END.

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